

FALSTAFF's WEDDING.

A
COMEDY.

WRITTEN IN IMITATION OF SHAKSPERE,
BY WILLIAM KENRICK, LL.D.

ADAPTED FOR
THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION,
AS PERFORMED AT
THE THEATRE-ROYAL, DRURY LANE.

REGULATED FROM THE PROMPT-BOOK,
By Permission of the Manager.

In magna voluisse sat est.

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TO THE
ACTING MANAGER.

SIR,

IT is with a fellow-feeling for your reputation, as an admirer of Shakspeare, that I understand you are at length persuaded the character of FALSTAFF is worthy the imitative talents of the greatest PLAYER; while you are candid enough to own it has been successfully imitated by the pen of a MINOR POET.—I doubt not that your resolution to perform, next season, the part of that facetious Knight in the following Comedy, will redound as much to the credit of the Actor as to the advantage of the

April 12, 1766.

AUTHOR.

PROLOGUE.

Spoken by Mr. DODD, in the Character of MERCURY.

[Mercury descends from the Clouds, flying across the Stage: Re-enters, followed by a Servant, carrying a Counsellor's Gown and Wig.]

ALA MERCURE, *equipp'd from top to toe,*
My godship's name and quality you know.
Commission'd from Apollo, I come down
To attend this bench of justices, the town;
Assembled here, all members of the quorum:
To lay a matter of complaint before 'em.

The errand's not in character, 't is true;
But what our betters bid us, we must do.
Therefore, t' appear with decency at session,
I've stole, you see, the garb of the profession.

This gown and band belong to serjeant Prig—
And this—~~only~~ brother Puzzle's learned wig.—

[Putting on the gown, &c.]

Dress makes the man, sirs, vestis virum facit—
So—now to business—Hem!—si vestris placet—
May't please your worships—Forgery, which is grown
To such a height as ne'er before was known—
I say, a forgery hath been committed,
By which king Pluto's mirmidons, outwitted,
Certain choice spirits, in theatric shape,
Have suffer'd from Elysium to escape;

Of Shakspeare's offspring an ideal train,
 Sprung, Pallas like, from an immortal brain !
 Their names—I have 'em down—but, to be brief,
 Shall only just enumerate the chief.
 Imprimis, with Madeira swell'd, and sack,
 There's Sir John Falstaff, alias call'd Plump Jack ;
 Next, Captain Pistol, a notorious bully ;
 And Miss Doll Tearsheet, fam'd for jilting cully ;
 The Widow Quickly, vintner, bawd and whore,
 With Bardolph, Peto, Nym, and—several more ;
 Link'd in a gang, each cut-purse with his crony,
 All arrant thieves and Dramatis Personæ ;
 Bent, as suppos'd, to prostitute to shame
 Th' aforesaid Shakspeare's honour, name, and fame.

I shall not trespass on your worship's time,
 T' explain at full the nature of this crime :
 But, Poets having an exclusive right
 To bring their mental progeny to light.
 This right's invaded by the party 'peach'd ;
 Who, vi et armis, hath th' old bard o'er reach'd ;
 By counterfeiting of his hand, do you see,
 Feloniously to set these vagrants free ;
 With base design t' adopt them for his own,
 Though Shakspeare's property, and his alone.
 Such is the fact.—A critic were an ass,
 No doubt, to let such imposition pass ;
 Nor could a cheat so palpable succeed,
 But that the captain of the guard cou'dn't read—
 Not he, for laughing, though to've sav'd his soul ;
 The scene and circumstances were so droll.

Pistol, with yellow night-cap patch'd with red,
 With Mother Quickly was retir'd to bed ;

*And, waking, swore, by Styx, he would not come,
Sans preparation, pike and beat of drum.*

*Of aqua-vitæ having stole a flaggon,
Bardolph and Nym were playing at snap-dragon ;
Sometimes proceeding from hard words to blows,
As by mistake Nym seiz'd on Bardolph's nose.*

*With Falstaff sat Doll Tearsheet, cheek by joll,
And while she buss'd his chin and scratch'd his poll,
Slipp'd from his thumb his grandsire's copper ring,
For love, not for the value, of the thing :
Then stole his empty purse ; but no abuse ;
'Twas only done to keep her hand in use :
He swearing, he'd be damn'd as soon as trust his
Round belly more with Hal, or his Chief-justice.*

*But this is wandering from the point. They're here,
And on your summons ready to appear :
Please to proceed then to examination ;
And be attentive to their information.
If, as your judgment cannot be erroneous,
You take this forgery to be felonious,
The author meaning fraud, I need not mention
Your issuing warrants for his apprehension ;
And when you've caught and into pieces tore him,
Hang up his mangled carcase in terrorem ;
In flagrant crimes the process should be short ;
The law is clear—I leave it with the court.*

Dramatis Personae.

DRURY-LANE.

Men.

Sir JOHN FALSTAFF,	-	-	Mr. Love.
Justice SHALLOW,	-	-	Mr. Parsons.
Master SLENDER,	-	-	Mr. Dodd.
Mr. PLEADWELL,	-	-	Mr. Aickin.
Dr. CAIUS,	-	-	Mr. Baddely.
FRIAR LAWRENCE,	-	-	Mr. Burton.
ANCIENT PISTOL,	-	-	Mr. King.
BARDOLPH,	-	-	Mr. Moody.
CORPORAL NYM,	-	-	Mr. Ackman.
GADSHILL,	-	-	Mr. Watkins.
OFFICER,	-	-	Mr. Strange.
FRANCIS,	-	-	Master Burton.
PETO, and Attendants.			

Women.

DAME URSULA, afterwards Lady			
FALSTAFF,	-	-	Mrs. Pritchard.
BRIDGET, her Chambermaid,	-	-	Mrs. Bennett.
Mrs. QUICKLY,	-	-	Mrs. Bradshaw.
DOLL TEARSHEET,	-	-	Mrs. Dorman.



FALSTAFF'S WEDDING.

ACT I. SCENE I.

A Street in Westminster, on the Day of the Coronation of King Henry the Fifth. Sir JOHN FALSTAFF enters.

Falstaff.

WHAT a scurvy quarter is this? Not a bush, or a blind Cupid in the neighbourhood! 'sblood, my legs will fail me ere I reach a tavern. Phoo—Phoo—It is some comfort, however, I escap'd with my life. The green-apron'd rascals, crowding after the procession, had well nigh made an end of me.

BARDOLPH enters.

Bar. O, Sir John, I'm glad I have found ye. I was in the fearfulest quandary for you in the world. I hope your honour has got no hurt.

Fal. Not its death's wound, I hope; though Hal, indeed, looked somewhat cold upon me.

Bar. Cold, Sir John! I am a-fear'd we shall be in limbo shortly: for my Lord-chief-justice—

Fal. Hold thy ill-omen'd croaking. If faithful services are thus requited, I will turn cordwainer—yea, cobbler, and heel-piece old shoes, ere I have to do with blood-royal again. Ingratitude! I hate it.

Bar. To be sure, Sir John, what you say is right; for, as the song says, ingratitude is worse than the sin of witchcraft. But I hope your honour got no personable harm in the mob: you were carried off the terrace, for all the world, like a dunghill from Mill-bank by a spring-tide.

Fal. Bardolph, away with thy filthy comparisons! I am ill at ease, and more dispos'd to spleen than merriment. I pr'ythee, look out, and see if there be a bawdy-house at hand.

Bar. What here, so near the court, Sir John?

Fal. Where better?—'Sblood, dost think there are no whores at court?—Are there no dames of honour?—Dost think Hal hath banish'd them too? Look out, look out.

Bar. I will, Sir John.

[*Exit.*

Fal. I would I were in Eastcheap. Mine hostess hath a most excellent cordial; and I never stood in more need of it than now. The gross indignity Hal hath put upon me, sticks in my throat, and in the end, may go near to choak me. I shall never gulp it down, that's flat: unless, indeed, a full cup of sherris help to clear the way. And then, how I shall stomach it—how I shall digest it, Heaven knows!—At present, both my person and knighthood are in jeopardy; my Lord-chief-justice, to whose care I am commended, holding me not altogether in good liking. But no matter; if I am to be provided for, what avails it who is my caterer? I could wish, nevertheless, old white wine stood higher in his lordship's favour, that I may not be stinted at table, or in my by-drinkings. I like not such splenetic temperaments; such phlegmatic constitutions; grey beards, that never make allowances for the continual waste of radical moisture.—'Sblood, I am as foundered and as sore as a blind horse in a mill.—Bardolph! where a plague art thou gotten to, caterwauling?

Mrs. QUICKLY and DOLL TEARSHEET enter.

Quick. O, Sir John Falstaff!

Dol. O, sweet Sir John!

Fal. How! mine hostess, and my good vestal Mrs. Tearsheet! save ye, gentlewomen both, good-morrow.

Host. Godild ye, Sir John—well, I vow and protest an I didn't say he would take as civil notice of his old acquaintance: nay, thof he was created by my lord-mayor of London.

Dol. What talk ye of lord-mayors and fusty citizens, gossip Quickly? Sir John is a courtier, and to be sure we must gratulate him now as one of the greatest knights in the nation.—O, sweet Sir John!—

Fal. Truce with your formalities, Mrs. Dorothy. Pray have you seen none of our followers by the way? Pistol, nor Peto?

Quick. No verily, Sir John, not one. We have seen nothing of any of them to-day. They are all gone to the coronation, I warrant; and indeed we should have been there too, had n't it been for that wicked villain, constable Fang, that, by a mistake of the beadle of our ward, would have carried us to Bridewell this morning.

Fal. How!—mine hostess and my fair Dorothy to Bridewell!

Quick. Even to Bridewell, I can assure ye.

Fal. But how; how! dame Quickly, to Bridewell! a decent church-going widow, and a modest maiden, I should say single gentlewoman to a house of correction!—why, what—

Quick. So I said, Sir John. Nuthook, Nuthook, says I, do you know what you do, says I?—Have me to Bridewell, says I—I say to Bridewell, indeed! a ruptable house-keeper,

that has paid scot and lot, and born the burthen of half the parish any time these twenty years.

Fal. That thou hast, hostess; of the male half, I'll be sworn for thee.

Quick. Besides, says I, do you know Sir John Falstaff? says I.—Touch a hair of Mrs. Dorothy's head, says I, and Sir John will make you smart for it, says I, every bone in your skin, says I.

Fal. And what said the rascal to that?

Quick. Said, Sir John! he stood mum-chance, and spoke never a living syllable, but set his vinegar-visag'd catch-poles upon us, who fastened their claws into Mrs. Tear-sheet's best kirtle, and tore it into as many rents and tatters, as there were in the old tapestry hangings I pawn'd to fit your honour out for the last expedition.

Fal. Pshaw!

Dol. Yes, indeed, Sir John, made a mere tatterdemallion of me. But we did so tongue the leather-ear'd vultures——

Fal. That they were glad to lose their gripe to get rid of you, I suppose.

Quick. Nay, Sir John, I was obliged to perduce an angel to convince them we were not of the parties indicted.

Fal. Infidel rogues! would nothing less than the testimony of an angel convince them?

Quick. Ay, I knew how Sir John would take it. O, how soundly will the knave constable be swing'd for this! a jack-in-office rascal! we shall cure the blue-skin'd runnion of his itch for whipping, I warrant ye.

BARDOLPH re-enters.

Bard. I have been looking all about, Sir John, but I cannot find one.

Quick. What is it Sir John wants, Mr. Bardolph?

Bar. A bawdy-house, mistress.

Quick. O, Jesu-Maria! Mrs. Dorothy.

Fal. How, sirrah! what call'st thou a bawdy-house! I sent thee to look out for a house of civil entertainment, where I might repose myself after my fatigue. Why, what, you rogue, would you make of me?

Quick. Marry come up, indeed! a bawdy-house, truly! but as to a house of civil entertainment, Sir John, here is one hard by, where the knights and lords, and all the great gentlemen of the court are entertained, both by night and by day, as civilly as at their own homes, and by gentlewomen as kind to them, I warrant ye, as their own ladies themselves. A house of civil entertainment a bawdy-house! why, I keep a house of civility myself, and I would have you to know, Mr. Bardolph—

Bar. Nay, nay, 't is all one; what Sir John pleases.

Quick. Yes, by my truly, and so I think it ought; for if Sir John recommends you to the king—

Dol. Nay, were I Sir John, I'm sure I would never promote such a clown as Bardolph at court.

Bar. Ah! Doll, Doll, I am afraid our promotion will be at the gallows. If Sir John has any interest with the hangman, he may get me preferr'd, perhaps, to the top of the ladder.

Dol. Why, how now, varlet?

Quick. Do you hear—do you hear, sweet Sir John?

Fal. Ay, hostess, Bardolph is somewhat blunt: but, as for the king—

Quick. Heavens bless him! a sweet young prince he was; and to be sure a gracious king he is. But what of him, Sir John?

Fal. Why, marry, hang him, hostess—Treason must out as well as murder.

Quick. I am amaz'd, Sir John; why, how is this?—what a goodness! when—whe—

Dol. How is this, good Bardolph?

Fal. Why, I will tell you how it is. That same ungrateful, sneaking, pitiful rascal we are speaking of, is turn'd fanatic.

Quick. Fanatic!—the king turn'd fanatic!

Fal. Ay, fanatic, presbyter, bishop, if you will. Let his crown be his mitre, I care not.

Dol. We don't take your meaning, Sir John.

Fal. You must know then, Doll, that after having, in pure love and affection, ridden post day and night fourscore and odd miles, to congratulate him on his accession, and condole with him on his father's death; instead of bidding me welcome to court, he preached me my own funeral sermon.

Quick. A funeral sermon!

Fal. Ay, hostess; for at the end of his discourse he ordered me to be buried alive, at ten miles distance from the court. And, to make this unnatural interment the surer, he has appointed my Lord chief-justice his undertaker, to see to the disposal of my corpse.

Quick. Buried alive, quoth he! what, what is in all this?

Fal. In plain terms, dame Quickly, your gracious king has banished me the presence; and till he grows a graceless prince again, I am forbidden to approach his person within ten miles, on penalty of being hang'd. Take ye me now?

Quick. O, Jesu! is it possible?

Dol. Ah, ha! is it so? sits the wind in that quarter?

Quick. Well, as I am an honest woman, who would have thought it? it is a world to see!

Dol. And so, Sir John is in disgrace; still plain Jack Falstaff, and one of us! ha, ha, ha! poor blown Jack!

Quick. A sad disappointment, indeed, Sir John! but in good faith, things fall out so odd, and the world goes so wrong, and the times are so hard; that here, there, why, no longer ago now than yesterday, was I obliged to pay the lord-knows-what-all away for one thing or other; and then my misfortune to-day; an angel to the constables; and besides, this comes the day after to-morrow, when I must make up a sum for the wine-merchant: wherefore if your honour would but discharge your score in Eastcheap; because, as why, your honour knows—

Fal. How's this, dame Quickly?

Quick. Because I say as why, your honour knows, seventy odd pounds is a great deal of money for a poor widow woman to lose.

Fal. What talk you of losing, hostess!

Quick. True, Sir John, as you say, to be sure, I shall not be willing to lose it: for the law is open, and I know which way to get my money.

Fal. I am glad thou dost, hostess: as in that case I need not give myself the trouble to pay thee. The law is open, say'st thou? Ay, like a mouse-trap, on the catch for nibbling clients. Enter thy action, and I will hold thee a gallon of sack, thy departed husband will get out of purgatory ere thou out of the hands of thy lawyer.

Quick. Nay, Sir John, you need not twit me upon that. You need not fling my poor husband's soul in my teeth. He has not been gone so long; though for the matter of that he might have been in Heaven before now, had'n't I lent you the money Mr. Dumb should have had to say masses for him. Yes, Sir John, you have put into that great belly of yours what should have got my poor husband out of purgatory, and now you reproach me for it. Had he been still alive you would not have used his disconsolate widow thus. You wouldn't, Sir John.

Fal. No, I'll be sworn I should not.

Quick. Well then, Sir John, out of charity, if it were nothing else, you ought to re-pay the money. Nay, if you don't, I'll pray night and day that you may be haunted by his ghost. Heaven rest his soul. I would he might never sleep quietly in his grave, till he has made you pay me.

Fal. Go to, thou art a foolish woman: with good words thou may'st be paid.

Quick. No, Sir John, good words won't do. I must have money, Sir John. The priests won't get a soul out of purgatory without money. Besides, Sir John, good words are no payment; I can get no body to take them; good words will not do with me.

Fal. Well, well, I say you may be paid——

Quick. May! Sir John, I must. You have thus shuffled off and on me, a good while; but I must, I must be paid, I must——

Fal. Heigh! heigh! wilt thou raise the neighbourhood upon us? If thou art clamorous, I will have thee duck'd in the Thames, for a bawd. What, a-plague, art thou drunk? On the honour of my knighthood thou shalt be paid. Dost thou doubt mine honour?

Quick. Why, Sir John, to be sure, nobody would scruple to confide in your honour's honour: but then you know, Sir John, (no-body better) what honour is. It will buy neither coals nor candles; nor will my landlord take it for rent, nor the merchant for sack or sherry. But would you give me only half the money, and leave the rest to honour; so that a body might keep open house, Sir John.—That would be doing something.

Fal. Nay, if thou wilt be advised, I will do more for thee. Bardolph! forget not to go (when I send thee) to the cashier, with whom I left a thousand pounds this morning, and tell him to satisfy Mrs. Quickly forthwith.

Quick. A thousand pounds!

Fal. The times are not so bad, hostess (thanks to our friend Shallow) but we may yet have a merry bout in Eastcheap. How says my Doll?

Dol. Nay, you know, sweet Jack, I was always at your pleasure there.

Quick. That I will say for her, and a sweeter-natured better hearted creature never lay by the side of a true man. But, goodness heart! why do we tarry here, when Sir John complained of his being fatigued, and was looking for a house of civil entertainment? I will shew you the way incontinently, Sir John.

Fal. I thank thee, hostess; I am now somewhat recruited, and will endeavour to reach Eastcheap. And yet a cup of sack, by the way, I think, would not be amiss. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

A Tavern in Eastcheap. PISTOL and NYM enter.

Pistol. Hang Pistol up with line of hempen string,
Ere he in rabbit-hutch be close immured.—
Seize the stiff cramp upon the fangs of justice.

Nym. Marry-trap, we shewed his myrmidons a light pair of heels though. I wonder what is become of Sir John. They have certainly nailed his fat paunch. We must not venture to the Fleet to see. They'll nab us there; and for the matter of that, I suppose, they'll be running the humour upon us here too. I will incontinently go and shut myself up. The storm may blow over when we are found uninvincible.

Pistol. Pistol disdains to skulk. *Nolens* 'tis fate:

But who would *volens* be incarcerated?

Nym, we must eat, and money have we none.

Nym. True, *nolus volus*, as you say, we must eat. I like to starve, like a rat, behind the arras, as little as another man. But what shall we do if Sir John be in limbo?

Pistol. Or *in* or *out*; his follower I no more.

Invention's mother is Necessity,

And Pistol's demon is an imp of wit,

Merc'ry suggests, and Pallas doth approve.

The great Ponjardo del Stiletto's dead,

Professor of the art of self-defence.

His broken foils, his daggers, belts, and blades,

The stock in trade, I'll purchase upon tick;

My face, disguis'd with an usurped beard,

These jutting eye-brows, turn'd from black to red,

Shall skreen from knowledge. Thou shalt too assume

A borrowed excrement, and partner be

In stock and block: since fighting's grown a trade,

Pence are pick'd up by masters of the blade.

Nym. The thought is lucky. Angels will ensue. But must we not transmutify our names?

Pistol. My brain's my godfather, and, at the font,
Me Don Anticho del Pistolo called.

Nym. And pray what did this same godfather call me?

Pistol. Signior Nymwego!

Nym. Good! Signior Nymwego! and you Don Anticho del Pistolo! I will hold them in oblivion. The trick of it pleases. But, here comes Quickly and Doll.

Mrs. QUICKLY and DOLL TEARSHEET enter.

Quick. So, gentlemen! you are got home before Sir John, I see.

Pistol. How fares the Knight? Is he in durance vile?

Quick. No, by my truly; he returns forthwith; but in a woful plight. Francis! What, Francis! bring the great chair for Sir John.

Francis. [*Within.*] Anon, anon, sir.

Dol. [*To Nym.*] Sirrah, Nym, hath Falstaff got money by him?

Nym. Yes, a thousand pounds; he borrowed it of Justice Shallow: but we shall be little the better for that; for the knight will certainly be in limbo.

Dol. May be, *no*; and may be, *yes*. It is no matter.

[*Doll and Quickly confer apart.*]

Nym. [*To Pistol, who stands musing.*] Does the humour hold? Or shall we wait the coming of the knight?

Pistol. And share his fate in base incarceration!

Shall Don Anticho del Pistolo prove

A vile hunt-counter? No—we'll thrive alone.

Hostess, farewell; we may return—or not.

Nym. Bye, Doll.

[*Exeunt Pistol and Nym.*]

Quick. 'Tis certainly so; Sir John hath got the money.

Dol. I know not that; but if he has, he'll probably carry it to jail with him. Here comes Bardolph; ask him.

BARDOLPH enters.

Quick. Is Sir John at hand, Bardolph?

Bar. He will be here incontinently, hostess: I only stept before, to let you know he was a coming.

Quick. But is it veritably true, Bardolph, that Sir John has got a thousand pounds by him?

Dol. Ay, is that true, Bardolph?

Bar. True, upon honour: he had it of Justice Shallow, of Gloucestershire; and it lies now in Master Jingle-cash, the banker's hands. But Sir John will be here momentarily. Is every thing ready?

Quick. In a minute we are all clear. Run, good Doll and receive the knight at the door. Francis! what, Francis!

Fran. [*Without.*] Anon, anon, sir.

Quick. Light up candles in the passage. A bottle of sherris, Francis—quick, you sleeping knave. Always upon a snail's gallop! O that ever woman should be plagued with such creeping varlets!

Dol. O, here is Sir John, himself.

Sir JOHN FALSTAFF *enters.*

Quick. Jaded to death, I warrant!—An easy chair, good Bardolph. Please to depose yourself, Sir John.

Fal. Soh! now have I taken up my sitting again in my old quarters. A glass of sherris, Francis!

Dol. And how do you find yourself, my sweet Knight?

Fal. Tolerably thirsty. [*Drinks.*] I can drink; and that is all the bodily functions I am capable of. I am as stiff, every part about me, as a walking taylor, or Don Diego on a sign-post.

Dol. Nay, Sir John, if that be the case, it is not over with you yet. Give me a buss.

Fal. Go, Doll, you are riggish—get you gone you water-wag-tail, you; I am not merrily disposed.

Dol. But, will you give me a new kirtle at Bartholomew-fair?

Fal. I will, Doll.—Nay, I cannot bear you on my knee.

Dol. Why, how came you so terribly mauled, my leman?

Fal. Did not I tell ye?

Quick. No indeed, Sir John, your honour spoke of fatigue; but did not descend to particles.

Fal. Well then, I will tell ye now. Give me first a glass of sherris. [*Drinks.*] You must know that, after the king

(hang him for a sheep-stealing cur) gave me that rebuff I told you of, he stalked majestically away, and left me to the mercy of the multitude: when, as I stood parlying with mine antient; mine arms a-kimbo thus; a knot of elbowing carls bore me down before them with the impetuosity of a torrent. Lo! there was I, jamm'd fast in the midst of a vile groupe of mechanics, as if we had grown together in a body corporate: and in this jeopardy was I carried along, sometimes bolster'd up on all sides, at the confluence of several turnings, like a May-pole; and at others, wirt-drawn between two stone walls, as if they meant to make chitter-lings of me: now, this fair round belly taking the form of a Christmas pye, and by and by pressed as flat as a pancake. It is a miracle I did not burst in the midst of them. Had it not been for the sufficiency of my buff doublet, I should have certainly burst.

Dol. If you had, Sir John, you would have went off with a report like a bladder.

Fal. A bladder, ye jade, a demi-culverin at least. I should have died an hero: my exit would have made some noise in the world.

Quick. Heaven forbid, Sir John, you should ever die a virulent death, I say.

Dol. I hope, indeed, sweet knight, you will never be pressed to death. That must be an odd end, and yet methinks I could bear much.

Fal. I'll be sworn thou could'st, Doll: but thou art a woman, and made to bear.

Quick. Yes, in good sooth, poor woman is made to bear every thing. She must suffer all a man's ill humours; let them lie never so heavy upon her: and, by my truly, some men are nothing else. But, to be sure, Sir John, you was most inhumanly used. Would nobody take pity upon you?

Fal. Pity! the most remorseless rascals! they made no more of me than if I had been a lump of dough they were kneading to make dumplings of: and to expostulate with the villains, would have been preaching to the winds.

Dol. Why did not you exert your courage, Sir John? draw upon them?

Fal. Draw, say'st thou? I could not come at my rapier to be master of a kingdom. And as for good words, in return for the few I gave them, they let fly their jests so thick at me, and peppered me so plaguily with small wit that I was dumb-founded.

Dol. I thought you could never have been overmatch'd that way, Sir John.

Fal. Yet so it was, Doll. They were holiday-wits, and came loaden with choke-pears: but, indeed, I was overpowered by numbers. Two to one, Doll, you know—They pelted me from all quarters. Will you hear? I will give you a spice of their sarcasms; a sample of the jibing pellets they threw at me. As I was thus stemming the tide, and crying out for the Lord's sake, a dried eel's-skin of a fish-monger asked me how I could complain of the crowd: 'Is 'a porpoise ill at ease (said he) amidst a glut of sprats and 'herrings?' I had not time to answer the smelt, before a barber-surgeon, the very model of the skeleton in his glass-case, offered to tap me for the dropsy; and to make us all elbow-room by letting out a puncheon of canary at my girdle. 'Right (cries a third, at the word canary) I'll be 'hanged if any thing be in the doublet of that fat rogue 'but a hog's-skin of Spanish wine;' and incontinently they roared out on all sides, 'Tap him, there—tap him, master 'surgeon.'—'Sblood, I was forced to draw in my horns, and be silent; lest the villains, being thirsty, should force the shaver to operation. The knave, indeed, was five wea-

vers off, and so could not well come at me; I might otherwise have been drank up alive.

Dol. And pray how cam'st thou off at last, Sir John?

Fal. By mere providence; for after the barbarous rascals had squeezed the breath out of my body, they buffeted me because I could not roar out, 'God save the King.' At length, I know not how, they threw me down in the cloisters, where, falling cross-ways, and the way being narrow, I fairly blocked up the passage: upon which, for they could not straddle over me, they took another way (a plague go with them!) for fear of losing the show. And thus was I left to take in wind, and gather myself up at leisure.

Dol. And did the mangy villains so play upon thy sack-but? a parcel of sapless twigs! dry elms, fit only for fuel: I would I had the burning of them.

Fal. Would thou fire them, Doll? Ha! art thou touch-wood still, Doll?

Dol. Nay, Sir John, not so.

Quick. No, I'll be sworn, Sir John, to my carnal knowledge, if there be truth or faith in medicine. But, Sir John, what would your honour please to have for supper?

Fal. Another glass of sherris—fill me out, Bardolph. I cannot eat. I have lost my appetite by the way. Put an egg into a quart of mulled sack, and give it me when I am a-bed. I will to sleep.

Dol. Would you have your bed prepared, strait, Sir John?

Fal. Aye, on the instant, good Doll. Hostess! go thou and see to the brewage of my sack.

[*Exeunt Doll. and Mrs. Quickly.*]

PISTOL and NYM enter.

Pistol. Sir Knight, I bring thee news: loud fame reports my lord chief justice hath recalled his warrants.

Fal. I would he were choaked with his warrants, ere he had issued them. But I thank thee for the tidings. The serjeants will not disturb my rest, at least to-night. But what comes here?

Pistol. From ducking-pond escaped in dripping plight,
The crooked-finger'd cut-purse, Peto hight.

Peto enters, leaning upon GADSHILL.

Fal. What's the matter, Peto?

Gad. Matter! Sir Knight, and master of mine!—Matter, i'faith, enough. The mob at Westminster had like to have murdered poor Peto here.

Fal. And how so?

Gad. Why, Sir John, as he was getting upon a cobbler's bulk, to see what was become of your honour, a raw-boned swaggering serjeant coming by, whipt hold of him by the leg, and threw him on the people's heads; where they shouldered him about from post to pillar, as they would have done a hedge-hog, or a dead rabbit that had been thrown among them. I'faith, I thought they would have killed him.

Fal. How! was that Peto? I saw the bustle at a distance, but took it for a huge boar-cat the porters and 'prentices had got, to make sport withal. By the Lord, Peto, I have a fellow-feeling for thy sufferings.

Pistol. And I. But say, is merit thus repaid?
Shall fortune play the jilt with men of mould?
Go, Peto, lay thy head in Parco's lap.

Fal. Good Peto, let me advise thee to go to bed,
And lay thy head on a pillow. Bardolph, see to him.
Pistol and Nym, good night.

Pistol and Nym. Good night, Sir John.

Fal. Francis!

Light me to bed—let Doll bring up the sack,
See to the jorden, and tuck up my back. [Exit.

Pistol. Signior Nymwego! Hear'st thou, lad of craft?

Nym. Yea, marry, Don Anticho del Pistolo—runs the humour well?

Pistol. Well, Nym; and thou and I, o'er cup and cann,

Will go, and schemes of operation plan. [*Exeunt.*]

ACT II. SCENE I.

A Street. Justice SHALLOW and Master SLENDER enter.

Slender.

I WONDER now, coz, when you know what a desperate kind of a horrible man Sir John is, you should——

Shal. Tut, tut.—I fear him not; there's ne'er a Sir John Falstaff in the nation shall over-reach me.

Slen. But what's done can't be helped, coz; he over-reached you now, as I take it, when you lent him the money.

Shal. Well, cousin of mine; then it is my turn now to over-reach him, and get it again.

Slen. That, indeed, Cousin Shallow, to be sure would be quite right; tit for tat, as we say in the country; but then he is such a bloody-minded caitiff; you know he broke my head once for nothing at all: and if he should get an inkling that you are going to law with him, O Lord, O Lord, I shall never sleep in quiet again.

Shal. Poh, you chit, if he breaks the peace, I shall know what to do with him, I warrant ye.

Slen. Ay, there indeed, cousin, ecod, I did not think of that. If I am in fear of my life, I can answer taking him up with a warrant, and binding him over to his good behaviour. Suppose therefore, coz, we swear the peace against him first, and lay him fast by the heels before we enter the

action.—And yet I don't know, if I might advise ye, I would wash my hands of him.

Shal. Talk not to me. I tell thee I will spend half my estate, ere the rascally knight shall carry it off so. I had rather the inns of court should share the money among them, than that the gorbellied knave should feast his enormous guts at any free-cost of mine.—I will to my counsel immediately; and if the law will not avail me, my sword shall do me justice,

Shen. You know best, Cousin Shallow, to be sure; but—

Shal. But me no buts, I say, but come along?

Your cousin Shallow puts up no such wrong.

An Officer of the King's Household and a Friar enter.

Off. There, good friar, thou hast it: it would little conduce to raise the king's wisdom in the general estimation of the world, to have it thought in the power of such unworthy men as Falstaff and his fellows, to lead him implicitly into all those extravagances under which the character of his youth suffered; and yet so it would go near to be suspected, if his highness should now act towards them with an ill-timed severity. My Lord-chief-justice hath therefore retracted his hasty orders for their imprisonment.

Friar. Son, well observed; and I commend his lordship's prudence, in treating their vices as infirmities; and will readily undertake to commune with them on the grievous enormity of their dissolute lives.

Off. His lordship would have you apply first to Sir John Falstaff, the ring-leader of this vicious troop. If you can dispose him to good, the rest may follow.

Friar. I will attend these reprobates, and use the means.

Off. His lordship requires that you would bring Falstaff over to retire to a monastery, if possible; that being con-

sealed from the eyes of the world, he may not daily remind it of what is past. Farewell, good father; I will see thee again at the Priory. *[Exit Officer.]*

Friar. [Solus.] I will go; but I fear my mission will prove as fruitless as that of many other apostles sent among infidels. As there is no danger of martyrdom, however, I am content.—Persuade Sir John Falstaff to turn monk! could I work miracles, indeed, and, like St. Thomas, turn an Ethiop white, something might be said for it; but, as it is, I despair of converting an old debauchee from two such prevailing heresies as the whore and the bottle. *[Exit.]*

SCENE II.

Tavern in Eastcheap. FALSTAFF and BARDOLPH enter.

Fal. Two sound naps, of eight hours a-piece, have something recruited me. Bardolph, my morning's whet. Is it prepared?

Bar. 'Tis here, Sir John. *[Gives Falstaff a tankard.]*

Fal. Here's to our better fortune. *[Drinks.]*

Bar. Ah, Sir John, I am afeard our fortune hath been at its highest flood. We have seen our best days.

Fal. So the world goes, Bardolph. Up and down? But is it not hard now? I that have—but that's nothing. I hate boasting. It is, however, well known what pains I have taken to make a man of that Hal. Nay, you yourself are privy to many the good offices I have done him. Before the younker knew me, he could not drink sack; made conscience of going to church on holidays; and blushed like a scarlet cloak at entering a bawdy-house. I instructed him in all the manly exercises. I was content to win his money, to teach him gaming: to get drunk myself to try to make

him so. Nay, setting rotten limbs and dignity aside, have I not even pimped for the bashful rogue? Such a prince of Wales! by my troth, I was ashamed of him. Had it not been for me, the milk-sop might have been crowned before he had lost his maidenhead.

Bar. And that would have been a pity, Sir John, to be sure.

Fal. It was I first taught him to way-lay the true-man; for I knew him when he durst not cry *stand* to a turkey-cock; nay, a gander, of the ordinary size of a green-goose, had it met him on a common, would have made him run for it. I went farther yet; and not only emboldened his actions, but taught him the manly arts of conversation. In the stile military, for instance, or swearing.—

Bar. Sir John, I believe, there you forget yourself; the prince wanted no assistance of you in that; for when he was a little crack, he would swear ye like a man six foot high.

Fal. Right, Bardolph, you are right. I remember me; swearing indeed he knew; for though but a king's son, he would, as thou say'st, rap out an oath like an emperor. But then for the quintessence of elocution, the hyperbole, vulgarly called lying; there I am a master. Yet what a deal of pains it hath cost me to teach Hal to lie; and all thrown away upon him. He would never do it roundly. He had no genius that way.

Bar. You know, Sir John, the prince never could away with lying. He used to say 't was beneath a gentleman and a soldier.

Fal. Well, well, he will never shine in the recital of his own exploits as Xenophon, Cæsar, and I have done.

Bar. Why, Sir John, to be sure, you have done something.

Fal. Something! the services I have done him and his fa-

ther are out of number. Methinks my behaviour, in the ever-memorable action at Shrewsbury, should make him blush at his ingratitude. Who killed Hotspur? Did not I give him his death's wound in the thigh? Was it not I who took prisoner that fiery dragon, Coleville? and that even alive! And am I thus requited? Is this the guerdon of my great achievements? Hang valour, I'll hack my sword no more. Thus has it ever been the fate of merit to be rewarded. Alcibiades and Bellisarius for that!

Bar. Ay, Sir John, they were tall fellows: they were sadly used indeed: I have heard of them. But that was in king John's time, I think.

Fal. They were the Falstaffs of antiquity, Bardolph.

Bar. Like enough, Sir John: they were before my time, to be sure; though Pistol told me, t'other day, that General Bellisarius was his god-father.

Fal. Pistol is an ignorant braggard; an ass: I have injured my dignity by associating with rascals, not worthy to wait at my heels. What tell'st thou me of Pistol?

Bar. Nay, Sir John, I meant no harm. I do think you deserve to be made a lord of, indeed.

Fal. I expected nothing less, I can assure ye. And then, for my well-known œconomy, to have had the sole management of the exchequer at least.

Bar. And instead of that to be banished——

Fal. I know not if I heard the word banish. I was forbidden, indeed, to come near the king's person by ten miles; but I was not at that distance when those injunctions were laid upon me. Query, now (it might pose a casuist, let me tell ye) whether I am thereby enjoined to march right out, ten miles an end; whether the negative *not come*, amounts to the positive, *go*.——I will not understand it so; and if that be my Lord-chief-justice's construction, by the Lord, I

will put him to the trouble of carrying me : I will be laid up with the gout ere I budge a foot.

Bar. Indeed, Sir John, the king did say, banish.

Fal. Admit it; unless he means to reside for ever in a place, and be in his own proper person as immoveable as a church, I hold my life on a damned precarious tenure. He must give me timely notice of his motions, that I may regulate mine accordingly; otherwise, if he be travelling my way, we may happen to encounter, and I get myself hanged through inadvertency. I do not think it safe, therefore, to stir out of town, without more explicit orders. Give me another draught.

Bar. The tankard is out, Sir John. Shall I replenish?

Fal. No. I'll toward St. Paul's: a gentle perambulation this morning may refresh me. [Exeunt.]

SCENE III.

A Street. Justice SHALLOW, Master SLENDER, and a Lawyer, enter.

Shal. Well, Master Pleadwell, are you still of that opinion. If so, my money's gone?

Law. Indeed, I am still of that opinion, Justice Shallow.

Shal. What! how! that my money's gone?

Law. Nay, I know not that. I say, I am of opinion you should have taken a bond, or obligation, at the time of lending it, friend Shallow. A thousand pounds on the bare word of a courtier; and that courtier, Sir John Falstaff! ne'er an alderman in the city of London would have lent a thousand pence on such security.

Slen. Oh, that ever a country 'squire should have less wit than a city alderman!

Larw. A thousand pounds, Mr. Shallow, is—

Shal. A thousand pounds. I know it is, Master Pleadwell, I know it well. But pray now, is there no method in the law to recover it? He cannot have spent it yet: cannot we compel him to restitution? Arrest him—arrest him, Mr. Pleadwell.

Larw. But should he deny the debt, how will you prove it? and who knows, on such an emergency, what Sir John Falstaff will not do?

Shal. Nay he will lie; that's the truth on't.

Slén. Ay, coz, and that most consumedly too.

Shal. I can prove his receipt of the money.

Larw. But the conditions, Justice Shallow. What have you to shew that he is engaged to return it? and when?

Shal. Nothing: I was weak enough to lend it him on his bare word.

Slén. Nay, cousin Shallow, not so neither. I'll be sworn he borrowed it upon his oath. He swore upon the honour of a true knight, to give him a thousand pounds again; and besides that, the comings-in of a better thing, in his majesty's court at London.

Larw. Ah, Master Slender, these knights have just honour enough to swear by; but, for any thing further, I am apprehensive we shall find him one of these honourable knights, whose word is as good as their oath. But see, if I mistake not, yonder he comes; this encounter may perhaps save us the trouble of attending him at home. Let us speak him fair, and persuade him, if possible, to sign an obligation for the money. If we can do that, we may trounce him. Let me alone with him.

Slén. O would you could, Mr. Pleadwell! what would I give methinks to see him well trounced! if it was only for giving me once a bloody coxcomb.

FALSTAFF enters.

Fal. How, Master Shallow! consulting with his lawyer! are you thereabouts, friend Shallow? would you hamper me with an action? [*Aside.*] I will pass them by. [*Going.*

Shal. Sir John, Sir John, a word with you, if you please.

Fal. O my good friends, Robert Shallow, Esq. and Master Slender! How fare ye gentlemen both?

Law. Sir John, Mr. Shallow here has——

Fal. Ha! what mine old acquaintance, Master Wheedlepoint! how is it with your health, Master Wheedlepoint?

Law. Pleadwell is my name, Sir John.

Fal. Right. I cry you mercy—Roundabout Pleadwell, I think. My memory is not so retentive as——

Law. No offence, Sir John, that is not the case.

Fal. Marry but it is, Mr. Pleadwell; a treacherous memory is my great defect: and a misnomer in law thou knowest——

Law. Would be matter of consequence, Sir John. But that is not our business at present. Mr. Shallow here hath put a case——

Fal. Ay, Master Shallow should know something of the law too. Was not he at Clement's Inn when thou wert first entered there? That must be many years ago, Mr. Pleadwell. Let me see—How many years ago must that be, Master Shallow? Why, you carry your age well, Mr. Pleadwell.

Shal. Pretty well, pretty well, Sir John, but that——

Fal. Nay marry, I say, very well, Master Shallow.—And pray what is become of young Puzzlecause, and Dick Silvertongue, your fellow-students there? they were called to the bar, I suppose. That Dick was a prate-a-pace

rogue? and a devil among the bona robas. He and Master Shallow here were two with the wenches. Ha, Master Shallow!

Shal. No matter, Sir John, at present we would confer on other business.

Fal. Nay, gentlemen, if ye are on business, I crave your pardon, and leave ye. I am not used to be impertinent.

Law. You are not going, Sir John; it is with you our business lies.

Fal. Business with me!

Shal. Yes, about the thousand pounds, Sir John.

Fal. What mean you, Master Shallow?

Shal. That you borrowed of me, Sir John.

Slen. Yes, Sir John, the thousand pounds you borrowed of my Cousin Shallow, Sir John.

Fal. Take me with ye, gentlemen, both; let me understand ye. You presented me, indeed, with a thousand pounds to promote your interest at court, Master Shallow; and may depend on it, if I can serve you——

Shal. Fiddle, faddle, Sir John, I expect my money again: your interest at court is not worth a farthing.

Fal. I cannot help that; the more is my misfortune, Mr. Shallow; you see my heart is good.

Law. If so, Sir John, you will not refuse to give Mr. Shallow something to shew for his money, under your hand.

Fal. How dost thou know that, Mr. Pleadwell? I must consult my counsel in this case.

Law. There is no need, Sir John; I will draw up a little instrument, to which thou wilt set thy hand immediately.

Fal. Not while I have a head, Master Pleadwell; I like not running hand over head in these matters. By latter Lammas, or St. Falstaff's day, I may perhaps bethink me.

Law. I now of no saint of thy family in the Calendar, Sir John.

Fal. Well, well, there may be saints of a worse. Our merit hath not stood in the way of promotion; that's all: and yet there are as many whoremasters there as lawyers, I believe. But I cannot tarry now to hold farther question with thee; fatigued as I am, and earnest to reach my lodgings yonder.

Law. If thou wilt there sign the instrument, Sir John, we will attend you thither.

Fal. Wilt thou? it is a notorious bawdy-house.

Law. No matter, Sir John.

Fal. No matter sayst thou? Is it then no matter for one of the grave sages of the law to be seen in a public bawdy-house? Lord, Lord, what will this world come to! My conscience, however, is more tender: I should be sorry to give such occasion of scandal.

Law. Please you, Sir John, to be serious. Let us rightly understand each other.

Fal. With all my heart, good Master Pleadwell; then, to be plain with you, I find you do not know me. You talk to me of restitution and conditions; did'st thou ever know Sir John Falstaff make restitution on any conditions? And dost thou think me so unpractised a courtier as to return the perquisites of my calling, because I am turned out; or to restore the purchase of my good will, because I am not likely to get in. What take ye me for a younker? a geck? Go to—you cannot play upon me. Master Shallow, rest you content; your money is in good hands; and, if I do not spend it like a gentleman, never trust me with a thousand pound again.

Shal. Oh! that I ever did trust such a caitiff!

Law. But pray, were these the conditions, Mr. Shallow? Was you to be repaid by a place at court?

Slen. To be sure. Why what do you think, Mr. Pleadwell, Cousin Shallow was fool enough to lend a thousand pounds for nothing? Why, I, myself, was to be made a great man too; and that into the bargain.

Shal. Cousin Slender, speak in your turn, I pray you.

Law. Were these terms specified?

Fal. Not indeed on parchment, *signatum & sigillatum*, Mr. Pleadwell. A courtier's promise is not, indeed, very good in law. But I can tell ye the places I should have procured for these noble 'squires: and by'r lady, thou wilt say they would have been well occupied. Having a little pique or so at my Lord-chief-justice, and Mr. Shallow, here, thinking himself qualified, I promised him my interest for his worship's removal from the quorum to his lordship's place on the bench. Was it not so, Mr. Shallow?

Shal. Don't belye me, Sir John, don't cheat me of my money, and laugh at me too. Robert Shallow, Esquire, will not put up with that.

Fal. Then for Master Slender here, I proposed, for his address and elocution, to have got him appointed orator to the house of parliament; or otherwise, in consideration of his figure and magnanimity, to have made him a staff-officer, or captain of horse, at the least.

Slen. Nay, Sir John, you did not tell me what; but I expected some notable place, I'll assure ye: for I look upon myself, plain 'squire as I stand here, to be somebody.

Shal. Coz, coz, you are an ass, coz.

Slen. Why, why, I didn't lend him the money; I.

Law. Justice Shallow, this is a very simple affair. I am sorry it is not in my power to serve you in it. Sir John, if you had either honour or honesty, you would restore the money; but, as you make pretensions to neither, I leave you.

[Exit Lawyer.]

Fal. Well, my masters, you hear the counsel learned in the law. Will you to dinner with me? You shall see I am no niggard. If you will lodge with me in Eastcheap, you shall see the thousand pounds fairly spent in sack: you shall share with me to the utmost farthing. But for dry restitution, I have not been accustomed to it for many years. You would not have me a changeling at this time of day, I hope, Master Shallow.

Shal. Changeling! no, Sir John, thou art no changeling; but, depend on it, I will not put up this wrong. Robert Shallow, Esquire, will neither eat nor drink with thee. If the law will not help me, I will take other methods. I will have my money; depend on't, I will have my money.

[*Exit Shallow.*]

Slen. Ay, ay, we shall find means to get the money; never fear.

[*Exit Slender.*]

Fal. Nay, I fear it not—at least before I shall have found means to spend it: and then, get it who may; it concerns not me. We shall see, however, whose business will be done first. Mine will go merrily forward. Ah! shallow Master Shallow! But who could have thought the snipe would have went to counsel, to get himself laughed at?—Then to see how demurely Sir Slyboots angled for me, as if I had been a gudgeon! How cunningly the rascally barrador would have hooked me on his instrument! But I was even with the methodical knave. My friend Shallow will never bring it to bear an action at law; and if he should, I am on the right side of the hedge. Indeed, were I to go to law for a mint of money, I would choose to have it all in my possession. There is nothing like it. Possession is the very life's blood of a bad cause: on the strength of which is mine, I will home to dinner.

SCENE IV.

A Fencing-School. PISTOL and NYM enter, disguised.

Pistol. Is this not better than the service mean
Of Cappadocian or Assyrian knight?
That last young quarreller, how much gave he?

Nym. Two marks for entrance and an angel fee.

Pistol. 'Tis well, keep 'count; and lend attention mute.
Dame Ursula, the night's neglected flame,
Grown rich, is fond of finery and name;
To her hath Don Pistolo made his suit
By love-epistle. *Nym*—What sayst thou to't?

Nym. What, rival Sir John! 'Tis true he does not go
there now, or he'd make a bloody business of it. You must
know I've courted her niece and chambermaid Bridget ever
since the last wind-fall.

Pistol. And hast thou sped?

Nym. Very scurvily, ancient. The jade runs her humours
upon me.

Pistol. *Nym*, I a letter for thee will indite,
In the true stile of a Castilian knight.
Woman is taken by mere words and whim;
Nymwego shall command what's held from *Nym*.
But see new swaggerers coming—keep your state.

Justice SHALLOW and Master SLENDER enter.

Sbal. Ay, this is my old school: here have I had my sa!
and my ha!—Odso, your servant, gentles, pray is Signior
Stiletto to be spoken with?

Pistol. The valiant wight translated is to heaven.

Sbal. Faith and troth, I'm sorry for that; heartily sorry
indeed.

Pistol. Ha! sorry! sayst thou, Paphlagonian vile?
Wouldst thou in Tartarus that he should howl?

Ha!—Ha! [*Draws and makes a lunge at Shallow, who retires.*]

Sbal. Not I.—Not I.—Pray moderate your passion.
Gad's mercy on me what a furious lunge!—Sir, understand me. Signior Stiletto was my honoured master; I had a friendship for him.

Pistol. I then embrace thee with a soldier's arm.
Stiletto was the glory of the sword,
The Ajax, Hector, Agamemnon, he!

Sbal. And, if I may ask without offence, pray, sir, what is the name and quality of your worship?

Pistol. I his successor am, and men me call
Anticho del Pistolo.

Sbal. A name of sound, and smacking loud of valour; it sorts well with your figure and profession.

Slen. Ecod I think so; his name and looks I'm sure make me tremble. I would I were safely out of the house, la!

Pistol. Need'st thou my service?

Sbal. To say the truth, sir, though I am not of a quarrelsome disposition, I have an affair of honour upon my hands; and, having long laid by my rapier, I came to take a lesson or two of Signior Stiletto; the better to withstand the force of my adversary. Now, since my old master is dead, I would be obliged to the skill of his successor.

Pistol. What is thy name and quality?

Sbal. My name is Shallow, sir.

Slen. Of Gloucestershire, esquire; justice of the peace, and of the quorum.

Pistol. A name of note, and smacking much of folly.

[*Aside.*]

It suiteth well thy figure and thy purpose.
Nymwego, hand the foils. There, grasp it well;
Bear thy point thus against thy rival's sword,
And had he twenty lives, he falls, Sa——Sa.

[*They skirmish, and Shallow is disarmed.*]

Shal. Enough, enough; for once, brave sir, enough.
I see, indeed, your worship is a master.
Another time I'll try my skill again.

Pistol. Enough's a feast. Farewell, till next we meet.

[*Exit Pistol.*]

Nym. And will not my young 'squire here enter into the
humour of it? Come, sir, lay hold.

Slen. Cod so, not I. I quarrel with nobody but my man.
And I can break his head at any time for six-pence. So I
have no occasion, sir, I thank ye—Come, coz, let's go.

Shal. Sir, there's my thanks; [*Gives money to Nym.*]
you'll see me soon again.

Slen. Yes, yes, my cousin will come again; but I've no
occasion, I thank ye. [*Exeunt Shallow and Slender.*]

Nym. [*Solus.*] These two 'squires are precious subjects to
play humours on.—I have it too: they've land and beeves;
and marry-trap, I will lay a trap for marrying them. Our
hostess Quickly and Doll Tearsheet, when bedizen'd, may
pass on those Gloucestershire oafs for London dames of
rank. Nay, they resemble the wealthy widow of Watling-
street, and buxom Beatrice of Bucklersbury, her forward
niece. This were a trick of price: I'll fashion it, by
working up these noodles into a conceit of their being be-
loved by the widow and madam Beatrice. I will about it
trait. [*Exit.*]

ACT III. SCENE I.

A Tavern in Eastcheap. FALSTAFF and BARDOLPH enter.

Falstaff.

BARDOLPH! How is it with Peto to-day?

Bar. Why, he's in a bad way, Sir John.

Fal. That all!—When was he otherwise? Who ever knew Peto or thee in a good way?

Bar. And yet, Sir John, we are your followers, you know.

Fal. Well said, Bardolph. I see thy wit is improv'd. I lead you the way, it is true; but you follow me, like spaniels, with damnable circumvolutions. But, whom have we here?

Bar. It is the doctor, Sir John, that has been up to see Peto.

Fal. O, doctor Caius Mithridate, the apothecary! a precious limb of Galen!—At Windsor he was a physician, and starved by prescribing poisons; but now he is turned apothecary, and thrives by administering them.

Doctor CAIUS enters.

Fal. So, master doctor, thou art a man of merit I see.—Thou art sought after.—Pray, how many patients may'st thou have dispatch'd to-day?

Caius. Pas beaucoup, Sir John—not great many. I pay visits betimes en bon matin, à monsieur de Peto.—But I must go now à l'instant, à la cour.

Fal. Nay, rest you a moment, Dr. Caius, I would commune with you a little on the score of old acquaintance.—

Pray, master doctor, how came you to leave Windsor? You were, I thought, in some repute there.

Caius. How came I to leave Windsor! By gar dat Windsor did leave me.—Répute! Morbleu, I was in de best reputation du monde. In dree year, dare vas no less dan dree honderd patients of quality under my hands. They did never complain of mal-treatment: and yet I did stay dere till I had no patients left.

Fal. Dead men tell no tales, doctor, 't is certain.

Caius. Eh, bien! my patients did die, sure enough; but dere was deir sons, deir daughters, deir cousin-germans; dey was alive, and commend my treatment of de defunct et non obstant, they would never call me in demselves.

Fal. That's much.—But did all your patients die, say you? Not one survive to trumpet the fame of their doctor?

Caius. Yes, by gar, dere vas one Bourgeois, fort riche et fort mal, he bring me more disgrace than all dose dat vas dead. I did exert all my skill for two, dree year, and he would not be cured.

Fal. Then why did you not let him go after the rest?

Caius. By gar he would not go. Il a été fort enteté, cet homme là. I have give him opiates, de narcotiques, stronger, by gar, dan Lethe itself. But he would not be composed; he would live to disgrace me. So he turn me off; and grow well himself, bientôt, presently, without any medicine in the world.

Fal. A base Plebeian tyke!

Caius. By gar, he was one base fellow, let me tell you dat. De quality no put such affront upon practitioner renommé, un homme comme moi.

Fal. Right, master Caius; it is a damned thing when people will not die secundem artem—but live in spite of the doctor. But to the present concern—How is it with Peto?

Caius. Oh! j'espere qu'il seroit beintôt guéri; he is in very fair way, Sir John.

Fal. Bardolph tells me here he is in a bad one; fair and good, I have heard often; but fair and bad, seldom. But what are his complaints, master doctor? I know something of physic.

Caius. Vy, Sir John, de cutis of de occiput est laceré: there be gross tumours all over de corps, de body. De patient has a delire, a vertigo; and besides, de symptomes febriles, de pouls indicat phlebotomy.

Fal. Phlebotomy!—What, bleeding?

Caius. A leetel, Sir John—ve vill take away but sixteen ounces, for un petit revulsion.

Fal. Sixteen ounces! Hast thou a design upon his life? What, a plague, wouldst thou kill him? He doth not weigh four pounds avoirdupoise, flesh, bones, and all; and thou wouldst take him away by quarters, in a slop-bason.

Caius. Vat is dat, Sir John? Vill you instruct me in de patologie, de therapeutice, de indications et contra-indications? Monsieur Peto must be bled.

Fal. Bleed sick apes and hypp'd monkies. If Peto be not hang'd, he shall die a natural death. Thinkest thou I'll have his veins drained to fill a row of porringers in a barber's shop window! use bits of red cloth and be damn'd: ye shall have the blood of no follower of mine.—Sixteen ounces! I tell thee, not Galen, Hippocrates, nor Esculapius himself, were they alive, should thus operate upon him. Phlebotomy! I will phlebotomize ye all with my rapier, by the Lord, if you offer to draw a lancet on him.

Caius. En bien donc, Sir John; be not in one passion; ve vill take little less; but by gar de patient vill die if he no be bled. And let me tell you, Sir John, you vould do vell to lose little blood. En verité vous êtes trop phle-torique.

Fal. Me! I thank thee. But, in the blood is the life of the creature, and I will not consent to part with mine.

Caius. Il seroit mieux aussi: It would be better, Sir John, you mix little more water in your wine.

Fal. More water! I mix none.

Caius. Vorse and vorse! By gar, Sir John, if you no shange your regime, you shall die. Your fat vill eat you up.

Fal. I shall eat up many a fat capon first, master doctor. But wouldst thou persuade me, with thy contra-indications, that water is better than wine?

Caius. Pour quelques temperamens et dans certains cas; for some constitutions, and in some cases, Sir John.

Fal. For thine, perhaps; but mine thanks thee for thy water. Wine is good enough for me.

Caius. Ah! que vous êtes mal avisé. Eh bien, Sir John, you will no take my advice, I leave you. Bon jour—good day to you, Sir John.—[*Aside.*] Eh! mon dieu! si gras! si gros, by gar, he cannot live long; he vill overlay his own belly, and burst, if he be not bled. [*Exit Dr. Caius.*]

Fal. Good day to you, master doctor apothecary. And yet I know not whether I ought to wish that neither; for a good day to him must be a bad one to somebody. A man of any conscience, or humanity, knows not how to salute fellows of such an occupation: for who would wish the rest of mankind lame and blind, sick and sorry, to find them employment, forsooth?—Poor Peto! I would not lose him, methinks; for though he be a worthless knave, he is an old acquaintance; and I never could find in my heart to part with my old acquaintance merely because they were good for nothing. King Hal is another sort of a man to what I am, to abandon his old friends in his prosperity thus. Poor Peto!

Bar. Ecod, Sir John, it happened lucky for me, I can tell ye, that I came off so well as I did yesterday.

Fal. Ay, by'r lady, thou playd'st fair to get off in a whole skin, and leave thy friend and master in extremity.

Bar. Nay, 'pon honour, Sir John, I did my utmost to keep up with you : but 't was impossible ; and indeed it was very fortunate that I was not myself trod to death by the populous.

Fal. Thou ! tell me the moon is a Suffolk cheese, or a Windsor pear. Thou ! have I not seen thee clear the ring without a staff at a bear-baiting ? Thou might'st make thy way through a legion, nay, the millions of a croisade : why, who would come within a fathom of that firebrand, thy nose ? It is a flaming, two-edged sword. Wouldst thou make me believe the villains would come near thee, to burn their holiday clothes ? Thou wouldst have set them ablazing like stubble, and have consumed the whole procession of heralds, like men of straw. A plague upon them, it was by their avoiding thee, I suppose, that I had like to have died a martyr to corpulency.

Bar. Sir John, you are always plaguing me about my face ; what would you have me do with it ?

Fal. Do with it ! If there were water enough in the Thames, I would have thee quench it. But water, I fear, can do nothing for thee ; since I remember, when we rode last from Canterbury, with the rain beating full in our faces, thou cam'st into the Borough with thy nose and cheeks glowing red-hot, although they had been hissing all the way like a taylor's goose. God forgive me—but when thou runn'st behind the hedge, in fear of the officer ; I could not help comparing him and thee to Moses and the burning-bush. But thou wilt in time be consumed : thy fire must out.

Bar. I would it were out, so be I might hear no more on't. In troth, Sir John, if I must always be your butt, I shall seek another service, I assure you.

Fal. Nay, nay, good Bardolph, that must not be. I speak not in disparagement, Heaven knows; for I mean to cherish thee against the lack of fuel, or the visitation of a Dutch winter.

Bar. 'Sblood, Sir John, I'll bear it no longer. [*Going.*]

Fal. Hold, Bardolph, where art thou going? thou glow-worm in magnature with thy tail upwards; thou pumpkin-headed rascal, stay, or——

Bar. Give me good words, then, Sir John—Why pumpkin-head, pray now?

Fal. Hast thou never seen a scoop'd pumpkin set over a candle's end, on a gate-post, to frighten ale wives from gossiping by owl-light? That is a type of thee—that is thy emblem: thy head being hollow, full of light, and easily broken; as thou shalt experience, if thou offer'st to fly thy colours till disbanded by authority. I shall need thee, I tell thee, to keep me warm, under the coldness of the king's displeasure.

Bar. Indeed, Sir John, burnt sack and ginger will do you more good: for whatsoever light I may give, I am sure, set aside choler, I am as cold as e'er a while-liver'd younker in town.

Fal. Cold, say'st thou! thy face would condemn thee for an incendiary before any bench of judicature in the kingdom! thou wouldst carry apparent combustibles into court with thee. Tell me not of cold. Thou wouldst certainly have been hanged long ago, had not the sheriff been afraid thou wouldst have fir'd the hangman or the gibbet.

Bar. Why, Sir John, I have been your attendant off and on these twenty years, come Candlemas; and I don't find I have had any such effect on you.

Fal. The cause, you rogue, the cause; am not I obliged to keep a pipe of Canary constantly discharging on me?—Are not the tapsters perpetually employed? the sack-buckets for ever a going, to keep me from blazing? And yet at times my skin is shrivelled up like an April pippin. Mark me but walk an hundred paces, with thee glowing at my heels, if I do not broil and drip like a roasting ox.

Bar. Ah, you are pleased to be hard upon me, Sir John, but I am sure my face never hurt a hair of your head.

Fal. No! look at 'em—Hath it not turn'd them all grey? Twenty years ago, before they were bleach'd by thy fire, my locks were of a nut brown.

Bar. Why, you grow old, Sir John.

Fal. Old! what call you old? I am a little more than threescore, and Mathusalem lived to near a thousand. Why may not I be a patriarch, and beget sons and daughters these hundred years, myself?

Bar. Then you must get a wife, Sir John, for your common fields, you know, never bear clover.

Fal. Marry! what to be made a cuckold of, I warrant ye?

Bar. Why, Sir John, if you should marry you would not like to be singular, I suppose.

Fal. Nay, for the matter of that all's one: But who will have me? Your dames of breeding are too fine and finicking for me to bear with them.

Bar. Ay, or for them to bear you either, Sir John.

Fal. Nay, whoever has me, she must be no tenderling; she must be none of your gingerbread lasses, that will crumble to pieces in the touzling. She must be none of your wishy-washy, panada gentry, neither; your curd and whey gentlefolks, that cannot support the embraces of a soldier; I must have a kicksy-wicksy of more substantial stuff.

Bar. Why, Sir John, what say you to Madam Ursula,

your old sweetheart? You have courted her, to my knowledge, these twenty years last past. I suppose you know her great aunt is dead, and has left her four hundred marks a year.

Fal. No, by the Lord, I heard nothing on't. She sent me a letter, indeed, into Gloucestershire: but I was over a bottle, and would not interrupt the glass to read it. I knew it was hers by the superscription, which, by the way, however, was as unintelligible as the hand-writing on the wall. It had never reached me had not the bearer been a decypherer. Go, Bardolph, and fetch it; you will find it, among other trumpery, in my cloak-bag.

[*Exit Bardolph.*]

Fal. Four hundred marks a year, quoth he! It were not an unreasonable competence, were not sherries comparatively so dear. But if the female incumbrance on it should turn out a shrew, the Lord have mercy on me! I shall be paid off for the sins of my youth. Let me bethink me. Four hundred marks a year! I have, it is true, small hopes from Hal; and shall grow old some time or other. These aches in my limbs forebode it. I cannot hold out for ever, that's certain. Were it not good, therefore, to make a virtue of necessity, and take up while I am in case to reap the credit of reformation? Could I reconcile it to my interest, I believe my inclination would follow.

BARDOLPH re-enters.

Bar. There, Sir John, is the letter.

Fal. Come on: let us see if we are masters of so much Arabic as to find out her meaning. [*Reads.*] Hum——hum——hum——! Why, dame Ursula, thou hast a memory. I could have credited thee for subtlety, on account of that old friend to woman, the serpent: but how thou couldst re-

member, for fifteen years together, what money I owed thee—that, indeed I, cannot account for. I have myself forgot it long since. She tells me here I have borrowed five hundred pounds of her at times, as tokens of my love. By the Lord, and as I am a soldier, I will love her still, and she shall command semblable proofs of it. [*Reads on.*] Hum—hum—Repayment of the money, or the performance of my engagements!—How! am I then to be married on compulsion? That will go most damnably against the grain.—But hold, if I marry, her money will be mine: if not, she may cease to lend when she pleases: and the fortune of that man is always at the turning of the tide, who depends on the caprice of a woman.

Bar. Why, marry her then, Sir John. I dare say she has heard nothing of your disgrace at court—so that she won't stand upon terms.

Fal. Marry, Bardolph, and I am half resolved to do so. Yea, by the Lord, and I will too. She has, besides, two thousand pounds in money; I will courageously make the attack, and mount the breach of matrimony. If I fall into the hands of the Philistines—why, good night. It is but going into purgatory a few years before my time. Bardolph, get me pen and ink, in the Cupid. Thou shalt be one of love's messengers. I will write to her in trope and figure: metaphor and hyperbole carry all before them with the women. Let her resist lies and nonsense if she can. [*Exeunt.*]

NYM, DOLL, and Mrs. QUICKLY enter.

Dol. But do you think, Nym, they won't discover us?

Nym. Not if you mind the trick of it, and don't betray yourselves. The old 'squire is as rampant as a goat, and conceited as an ape. And as for the young one, he has but

four senses out of the five. Let not your breath smell of aquavita, nor your lips smack of bawdry. Array yourselves antique, look modest, and speak supernaculum. Do this, and they'll never suspect you.

Quick. O, let me alone for speaking supernaculum; I have a set of the courtliest phrases in my huswifery book! I'll con them by heart.

Nym. Well, go prosper: Pistol will be here presently.

Quick. Fear not—we'll lose no time: Come, Doll, we shall be made women, if this plot succeeds. [Exeunt.]

Dame URSULA and BRIDGET enters.

Urs. And do you think, Bridget, Sir John will be at last as good as his word, then?—How sits my coif to-day?—I would thou hadst bought me one of those new-fashioned farthingales.

Brid. O, madam, you are mighty fine as it is, truly: and, I am sure, Sir John can do nothing less than admire you.

Urs. Thinkest thou so, Bridget? Why, to be certain, a peach-colour'd satin does become my complexion hugely. But I think the roses are faded in my cheeks. Well, no matter: he might have gathered them twenty years ago, had not he been a rover. I hope, however, he has sold his wild oats now, and that I shall yet have the satisfaction to be called my Lady Falstaff.

Brid. To be sure, madam: and though Sir John is but a knight at present, he will be very assuredly, now the young king is crown'd, be made a great lord, and may be a duke. Indeed, madam, I cannot think of less.

Urs. And then shall I be a dutchess, Bridget. Dame Ursula a dutchess!

Brid. Ay, madam, that will be a day to see—if I am so happy as to be in your grace's favour.

Urs. For certain, Bridget, thou shalt. Well, this love is a strange thing! there is Sir John has deceiv'd me a thousand times, and yet, I know not how, he always persuaded me he was sincere.

Brid. A sure sign you loved him, madam.

Urs. And yet to be sure, before I received his letter, I thought I never should hear from him again, and had almost come to a resolution to cast him entirely off.

Brid. In good sooth, madam, that is very prudent; to cast off a lover when we find he will leave us.

Urs. I think so, and not a little imprudent to do it before, for one of my years at least.

Brid. Why, madam, you are not so old.

Urs. Indeed, but I am—old enough to know I ought not to part with one lover till I am sure of another.

Brid. To be sure, madam, a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush; but the sport of hampering the rogues, who are at liberty, is so vastly pretty.

Urs. Ay, if we were sure of catching them at last; but, Bridget, Bridget, how often do they escape through our fingers, and give us the slip! Besides, it is for younger lasses than I to go bird-catching—I cannot throw salt on the tail of a sparrow now.

Brid. Nay, say not so, madam; you forget your new lover, Don Anticho del Pistolo.

Urs. Hang him, fustian-pated rogue, whoever he be, to pester me with his epistles.—To write letters for his comrade to thee too! well, as I live, I will expose this pair of bombards to Sir John. I will shew him their letters.

Brid. Madam, the knight is coming.

Urs. Bless us, Bridget, and so he is. Introduce him and leave us.

FALSTAFF enters.

Fal. Well, my fair princess, see thy wandering knight.

Urs. Welcome to London, Sir John; thou art indeed a wanderer.

Fal. A true knight-errant for thy sake.

Urs. For my sake, Sir John.

Fal. Ay, for thine, my Helen. Have I not encountered tremendous giants and fiery dragons, in the rebels of Northumberland and Wales?—And then for magicians and enchanted castles: Owen Glendower and his Welch devils we put to the rout; and many a strong hold between here and West Chester have I visited, releasing fair damsels and distressed 'squires from captivity. I brought two of the latter up to town; I would they were safely immured in the country again.

Urs. And all these exploits for me, Sir John.

Fal. As I am a true knight, to lay my laurels at thy feet.

Urs. Do you then still love me in sincerity, Sir John?

Fal. Do I love thee?—Am I a soldier?—Have I courage?—Love thee!—I will be thy Troilus, and thou shalt be my Cressida.

Urs. You have long told me so, indeed.

Fal. And can I lie?—Thou shalt be sole possessor of my person and wealth. Thou shalt share in the honours done me at the court of the new king. Thou shalt—But what shalt thou not do?—We will be married incontinently.

Urs. O, Sir John, you know your own power, and our sex's weakness: but indeed for decency I cannot so speedily consent—Besides, Sir John, I am not yet put into possession of my estate and monies.

Fal. Nay then, as thou sayst, love, for decency's sake,

we must bear with a short delay : but I will no longer be kept out of possession than thou art.

Urs. You shall not, Sir John ; and in the mean time our lawyers shall confer on the terms of our marriage.

Fal. I hate lawyers. Let a priest suffice. Am not I a man of honour ?

To do thee less than justice were a sin,

Give me thy lips, we'll settle all within.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

A Chamber. Justice SHALLOW and Mrs. QUICKLY enter, dressed in tawdry Clothes.

Quick.

NAY, forsooth, Mr. Shallow, I am too young a widow ; much too young to think of a second husband.

Shal. Not so, fair mistress. If to wed be good, the sooner married still the better speed. My assiduities will make you soon forget your former spouse.

Quick. Your acidities, indeed, are very great, Mr. Shallow. But you are too pressing : I cannot so soon forget poor Quickly.—*What the gouters have I said.*

Shal. Quickly !—I thought your husband's name was—

Quick. Yes, yes, and so it was ; but I called him always Quickly, because he was ever so slow. He died, poor man, of a slow melancholy. Always asleep ! night and day asleep.

Shal. Hah ! addicted to somnolency.

Quick. Ay, so the doctors said. He died of a solemnity, and a solemn end, I warrant ye, he made of it.

Shal. He was too fat and corpulent, perhaps ; I am leaner.

Quick. Yes, Sir, he grew fat and burstened, by setting

with his guests, instead of minding the main chance, and scoring double.

Shal. Say you? mistress!—

Quick. *Blisters on my nimble tongue.* I say, Mr. Shallow, he was rich, and keeping open house, had store of guests, that made a world of trouble.

Shal. Open house, and leave so much behind him: that is rare!—he traded greatly?

Quick. Greatly, Mr. Shallow.

Shal. And bore arms.

Quick. Two pumpions on a cucumber bed.

Shal. They will quarter.—I'll settle on thee fairly, widow.

Quick. Will you, Mr. Shallow?

Shal. Ecod, I will. Ay, twice as much for such another smile. Odds heart, that look shot through me, like an arrow. Nay, I will kiss thee, fackins will I——

[They struggle; Shallow kisses her, and she breaks from him in affected anger.]

Odds bobs! a dainty widow!

Quick. You're rude, sir; I must leave you. *[Exit.]*

Shal. Hah! gone! then Shallow shall not stay behind, But will pursue and force her to be kind. *[Exit.]*

Mr. SLENDER and DOLL TEARSHEET enter.

Slen. *[Sings.]* Slender and tender,
And no mere pretender.

Ha! said I well, Mrs. Beatrice?

Dol. Ay, and sung well too, sir.

Slen. Nay, I have a sweet breath to sing with: that's the truth of it. And yet I warrant you did not know I could sing so well, when you first fell in love with me.

Dol. Oh fye, Mr. Slender. You make me blush. Young

maidens should not be told so, though it were true. But, pray, where learnt you now that I was in love with you? Who told you this?

Slen. Marry, that did my uncle Shallow's fencing master, the Don with the hard name. I should otherwise have blushed more by half than you. Hang me if you had caught me at falling in love first. But one good turn deserves another, as we say in the country.

Dol. To be sure, Mr. Slender hath parts.

Slen. Marry, would I might be hanged else. Why, do you know that I have had maidens in love with me twice and once before now.

Dol. In the country belike.

Slen. Yea, verily, there was Mrs. Anne Page of Windsor, would have given, I warrant ye, more than I wot of, to be married to me.

Dol. And you would not have her.

Slen. Yes, I would have had her then; but I know not how, they cozened me, and married me to a great lubberly boy.

Dol. To a boy!

Slen. Yes, la! but, for that trick, if ever I marry any body again, I'll take care they do n't wear doe-skin breeches under their petticoats; that I will.

Dol. Ha! ha! ha!

Slen. Nay, it was no such laughing matter that I know of.

Dol. Ha! ha! ha!

Slen. Ecod, if you laugh so at me, handsome as you are, I'll go and tell my uncle? so I will. [Exit.

Dol. Go thy way, with God's blessing, for a fool; were it not for thy wealth, Doll Tearsheet would not follow thee.

[Exit.

SCENE II.

Tavern in Eastcheap. FALSTAFF enters, laughing.

Fal. Don Anticho del Pistolo! what a bombast rogue it is! I knew his hand writing the moment I saw it. But I have put a spoke into the wheel of his contrivance. Dame Ursula and her maid have given these rascals encouragement. If they bite, the scoundrels will be hooked.

FRANCIS enters.

Fra. Sir John, here is the hobbling friar that has been so often to ask for you. Shall I say you are at home?

Fal. Ay, let him in.—What can the gouty precisian want with me?

A Friar enters.

Friar. Peace be with you. Sir John, God save ye.

Fal. Thank thee, good father. What is your reverence's will.

Friar. I think thou dost not know me, Sir John. It is indeed many years since our personal intimacy: your way of life and mine——

Fal. Were something different, father, to be sure: and though I may have seen you before, it is so long since I have been at shrift, that I must crave your pardon if I have totally forgot you. And yet your reverence may be my ghostly father, for ought I know.

Friar. Fie, fie, Sir John, a man of your age and gravity.

Fal. Hoh! if your business be to chide me, I shut mine ears.

Friar. If you will not admit your wound to be probed, how can you expect to be cured, Sir John?

Fal. Cured! 'sblood, I took thee for a priest, and I find thou art a surgeon.

Friar. A spiritual one, Sir John; and such as your disorder requires.

Fal. Dost thou know my case then? A spiritual surgeon, sayest thou? I am not given over by the surgeons bodily yet. Who call in the divine till they have sent out the doctor?

Friar. I know your case well, Sir John. It is perhaps less your body than your mind that is affected.

Fal. Nay, like enough. I have indeed been damnably dispirited ever since the king's coronation. A confounded melancholy hangs upon me like a quotidian ague.

Friar. It is that melancholy, and the cause of it, Sir John, I would remove.

Fal. And how would'st thou remove it? By providing me with a charge of horse, and restoring me to the king's favour. I know no other way.

Friar. By inducing thee to repent, and be restored to the favour of the King of kings, which thou hast forfeited by a dissolute and abandoned life. Dost thou not think thou art in a state of reprobation?

Fal. Pray, friar, by what authority dost thou take upon thee to catechise me? Dost thou come out of mere charity, or art thou employed by thy superiors?

Friar. Suppose the former, Sir John.

Fal. Suppose the former, father friar, why then the devil is so strong in me, that I should be tempted to throw thee headlong down stairs for thy charitable impertinence.

Friar. Thy ill manners, Sir John, would be inexcusable, were it not to be supposed the consequence of an habitual antipathy to every thing that is good. But I will not lay claim to greater merit than is my due. I am come by order of my Lord-chief-justice, who is so much your friend as to interest himself in your reformation.

Fal. My Lord-chief-justice! that's another matter. I cry thee mercy, reverend father. I find thou'rt not the man I took thee for. Your reverence does me honour; and I profess I am much indebted to his lordship's kind love and regard to my soul's health.

Friar. You'll hear me then, Sir John.

Fal. Yea, Heaven forbid I should not—what I said was meant against those officious zealots who are so forward to pry into mens consciences that will not bear the looking into.

Friar. Sir John, we know your failings; and shall not put you to the trouble of auricular confession at present.

Fal. There, friar, thou winn'st my heart. Come, sit thee down. Wilt drink a glass of sack?

Friar. I never do, Sir John.

Fal. I cry thee mercy, then. Here is to your reverence's health; and now I'll tell thee what—I do protest I sit me now upon the stool of repentance, and have been honestly deliberating, some time past, to change my course of life. I am heartily tired of it. Indeed I am, good father.

Friar. I am glad to find thee in such promising dispositions, and think thou couldst not do better than to betake thyself, agreeable to his lordship's intentions, to some monastery, where thou wilt be secluded from temptations, and have all spiritual assistance to encourage thee to mortify the desires of the flesh.

Fal. Hold thee there, good father. Let me understand thee. What! would his lordship make a monk of me? I must there beg his pardon. A monk; and to mortify the flesh! For Heavens sake, good father, consider what a mortification indeed that must be to me, who have six times the quantity of any other man. If I must be included within the pale of the church, why not make a canon of me (not indeed a minor canon) but a prebendary, or a bishop, now.

Something might be said for either of these. But for a monk! I know not any thing I am less fit for; unless indeed his lordship had meant to make a running footman of me.

Friar. Nay, Sir John, his lordship will not use compulsion in this. He will not so far lay a restraint on your inclinations.

Fal. O, if I ever find myself that way inclined, his lordship may depend on it I shall be as ready as ever to follow my inclinations. But the lesson of lean and sallow abstinence is very long and hard, good father; I am not gotten half-way through the first chapter yet.

Friar. Some steps, however, Sir John, you must take toward a more reputable way of life; and that speedily too: otherwise you will be stript of the honours of knighthood; and the king's sentence of banishment will be strictly put in execution against you.

Fal. As to the matter of knighthood; once a knight and always a knight, you know. The king may make as many knights as he pleases; but he will not so easily unmake them again. My title will not depend on the king's courtesy, but on that of my followers. I am, notwithstanding, very desirous to give his lordship satisfaction: and do assure thee, on the honour of a soldier, of the sincerity of my repentance.

Friar. And yet this may be only a transitory fit of penitence, owing to your late disappointment. What reason canst thou give me to hope this state of mind will continue?

Fal. Why, father, what I am shortly going to do is an act that has confined many a man to a state of repentance, which has continued to the last hour of his life.

Friar. This, Sir John, is saying something. Pray, what are you going to do?

Fal. I have taken a resolution, father, to——What dost thou think now it is I have resolved upon?

Friar. Some commendable act of penance, no doubt.

Fal. Nay, it may be well called so, I believe. I am determined, good father, to marry.

Friar. Call you that an act of penance, Sir John? Is marriage a state of mortification?

Fal. I wish I may not find it so.

Friar. Well, Sir John, marriage is a holy state; and in some degree I approve your resolution; but, in the estimation of the church, it is also an holy act, and ought not to be entered into unadvisedly. Your repentance should precede your receiving the benefit of that sacrament.

Fal. O, doubt not but I shall repent me sufficiently afterwards.

Friar. Ah! Sir John, Sir John, I fear me you are no true penitent: but, however, it may be lawful to salve what cannot be effectually cured. I did not expect to make a convert at the first interview. If thou takest any measures that tend towards reformation, thou shalt have my prayers and best assistance therein. Another time I will hold farther conversation with thee.

Fal. In the mean time, good father, let me stand fair in your report to my Lord-chief-justice and his Majesty.

Friar. Thou shalt stand fairer than I fear thou deservest. Farewell.

[Exit Friar.]

Fal. Fare thee well, good father friar. What an hypocritical puritan? Would not drink sack! Not with the ungodly, I suppose. But I am damnably mistaken, if he be not indebted for that rosy countenance and the gout, to the penetrating qualities of old sherris.

BARDOLPH enters.

Fal. Well, Bardolph, what news dost thou bring?

Bar. Marry Sir John, I have just seen a sight that you would have chuckled at.

Fal. And what is that?

Bar. Why, Mother Quickly and Doll Tearsheet, attired like dames of fashion, and courted by Justice Shallow and Master Slender. For my own part, I'm out of the plot; but I find the contrivance is deep: the 'squires are caught. Pistol and Nym are somehow at the bottom of it. That's all I can learn.

Fal. Bardolph, those knaves would leave me, and set up for themselves. The 'squires are mine; a lawful prey, and shall not be fed upon without our leave. Learn more, and I will bethink me how to counteract the villanous machinations of these runagates. But, now, attend me forth. [*Exe.*

URSULA and BRIDGET enter.

Urs. Now, Bridget, mark me well. That errant knave, Our Spanish suitor, will anon be here. Sir John requests that I do greet him kindly, And give him flattering earnest of success.

Brid. Doubt not my cunning: I've been taught ere while to set an egg upon its little end.

Urs. A grappum's secret, Bridget; but no more—
What creature's that, who with enormous strides
Measures the pavement yonder?

Brid. 'Tis the Don—I will be ready, madam, when you please, to scare him hence. [*Exit Bridget,*

Urs. Nay, he shall have some sour as well as sweet;
Keen as he is, all honey is not meet.

Pistol enters.

Pistol. Fair dame, I kiss your hands, your gentle brief,
Borne by the winged Mercury, came to hand;
And sends your slave to meet his amorous doom.

Urs. I fear, sir, I have trespassed on the bounds
Of maiden modesty, to write so freely.
What will the world say of this strange demeanour?

Pistol. Breathes he the vital air will dare to cast
Reflections base on Ursula's fair name?

Urs. Indeed, Signior Anticho, I have a woman's timi-
dity, and am apprehensive my behaviour in this particular
will seem too light. Affections of so speedy growth are
blamed, as weeds too rank to thrive in true love's garden.

Pistol. No general rule's without exception, lady.
The object of your choice—Pistolo's fame
Will silence all that hear and know his name.

Urs. In that indeed I place my confidence: and yet a
stranger, till his worth's approved, however noble in his
native soil, is open to suspicion. Not that your valour,
birth, or virtuous fame I mean to question; but to please
my phantasy, and justify my conduct to the world, I would
know more of your high rank and pedigree. What is the
blazonry of its distinction?

Pistol. Pistolo wears his coat upon his sword.
Behold this blade.—The very steel is dy'd [Draws.
With blood of Infidels, Jews, Turks, and Moors.

Urs. It hath a scurvy coat upon't, indeed.

Pistol. True, lady, this no burnish'd Finsbury blade,
Ta'en by young cutlers from their stock in trade,
And in Moorfields on holidays display'd.—
A soldier's weapon this, that bravely fell
In Palestine on Saracens pell-mell.

The gift of that renown'd and peerless paragon
Rhodomontado hight, the king of Arragon.

Urs. And hath Pistolo's valour then been shown
In Palestine? That merit's great, I own.

Pistol. There by this sword so many foes were slain,
That it was called the flaming sword of Spain.

[*Putting up his sword.*]

Urs. Indeed! 'T were much a warrior to withstand,
Who comes victorious from the Holy Land.

BRIDGET enters, in a hurry.

Brid. Good gracious! madam! Sir John Falstaff.—

Pistol. Ha! who? who? what's that? Falstaff didst thou
say?

Urs. No matter, sir, you shall not hence away.
It is a quondam sweetheart; whom, for thee,
I shall dismiss with frowns, as thou shalt see.

Brid. Heavens, madam, I would not for the world Sir
John should come in while the cavalier is here. We should
have bloody doings I warrant. Did not the knight, when
he was here last, complain of your indifference, and vow
vengeance on your new lover?

Pistol. [*Aside.*] By Styx, he'll know and foil me.

Urs. Poh! poh! this gentleman fears him not, nor
twenty such. Don Pistolo's sword hath been flesh'd among
the Moors.

Brid. Moors! lack-a-day! what talk you of Moors?
What are simple Moors to such a paramour as he. You
know, madam, he is desperation at the loss of your lady-
ship's affection.

Pistol. Thou, mistress Abigail, art in the right—
Prior pretensions if the Knight doth boast,

Why happy man be's dole, say I,
Il primo venuto il primo servito.

Urs. How's this, signior? Shall not a woman of my age
and fashion make my own choice? And can your honour
thus desert your fortune.

Pistol. Desert my fortune! ha! why—what—O, no—

Urs. Nay, nay, I claim protection from your sword
Against this rude intruder.

Pistol. Furies!—[*Pauses.*] Oh! I have it.—
Enough—thou sayst—my sword thou shalt command
'Gainst Pagan recreant or Christian knight,
Come forth, Toledo—[*Draws.*] Ha! what's this I see?
O, blunder vile, unfortunate mistake!
My varlet hath equipp'd me with a foil,
A blunt and batter'd foil, sans point and temper:
It would not parry ev'n a bulrush; this!

[*Throws away his sword, which Bridget picks up.*]

Urs. Bridget, let's see——

[*Takes the sword, and clapping the point to the ground,
bends it double.*]

Alas! 'tis so, its plain,
Ha, ha, ha, the flaming sword of Spain!
'The gift of that renown'd and peerless paragon
'Rhodomontado hight, the king of Arragon!

[*Holding it up in derision.*]

[*Turning to Pistol.*]

Nay, do not take my humour thus amiss,
I'm light of heart; but nothing meant t'offend.—
As with this poultry foil thou can'st not fight,
Myself will with't encounter this same knight.
Bridget will safe conduct thee to the gate.

Go, and good tidings speedily await. [*Exit Ursula.*]

Pistol [*Looking after her.*] The gibbet be my portion, if
I trow,

Whether she means to jilt me now, or no;
But fata trahunt—Abigail, lead on,
If Falstaff's near, 'tis time that I were gone. [Exeunt.]

SCENE III.

A Street. Justice SHALLOW and Master SLENDER enter.

Shal. Take me—take me this letter, I say, to Sir John Falstaff. That is his suttling-house. I will maul his cloak-bag of chitterlings with my rapier, as I may.

Slen. And will you fight him, cousin? Well, hang me if I carry the challenge. I never could abide the thoughts of cold iron. Even a key put down my back for a bloody nose, ugh—ugh—ugh, would always set me a shuddering.

Shal. Don't tell me—if the law will not get me my money, I'll be revenged of him. The tun-bellied knave shall not make such a fool of me. I will have his blood or my money.

Slen. His blood! O lud! O lud! Why, Cousin Shallow, you are enough to—

Shal. Carry me this letter, I say, to Sir John Falstaff. What is it to you? If I am killed, you are my heir, and come in for my land and beaves. So, do as I bid you.

Slen. Ecod, that's true. I did not think of that: if my cousin's killed, I come in for his estate. [*Aside.*] Ay, I'll carry him the challenge. Hey! here he comes, with his bottle-nos'd man, that picked my pocket at Windsor.

FALSTAFF and BARDOLPH enter.

Shal. Sir John! Sir John Falstaff!

Bar. Sir John, Justice Shallow calls ye.

Fal. What would the blade of spear-mint have with me?
I have done with him.

Shal. But I have not yet done with you, Sir John? I would first have my thousand pounds of you again.

Fal. You would, Master Shallow! like enough! You must take me then in the humour. I am at present ill-disposed to your suit.

Shal. Tut, Sir John. I have said I will not tamely put up this wrong. If I do, I shall be flouted and jib'd to death: I shall be pursued by the mockery of a whole hundred.

Fal. Not unlikely. But, believe me, the more you bustle in this business, the more you will expose yourself. The more you stir—you know the proverb, Master Shallow; it is a little homely, so let that pass. Yet, let me advise thee; rest content.

Shal. Content! I am not content. I cannot be content. Nay, I will not be content. Give me back the money, or I will have satisfaction of thee.

Fal. Satisfaction, say'st thou? Why, thou wilt not dare me to the combat.

Shal. Such provocation would make a coward fight, Sir John.

Fal. If it make thee fight, I'll be sworn it would: for I have seen thee tremble at the shaking of a wheat-ear.

Shal. To be bamboozled! cheated! laught at! I will not put it up. By Heavens, I will not put it up.

Fal. Well said, Master Shallow. Now I see there's mettle in thee. But surely thou would'st not be the first to break the peace! thou, whose office it is to punish the breach of it.

Shal. Sir John, there are times and reasons for all things. If you will neither give me my money nor gentleman's satisfaction, I will have thee tossed in a blanket for a paltroon as thou art.

Fal. They must be stout carls, Matter Shallow, that toss me in a blanket.

Shal. Well, well, we shall see—I'll parley with you no longer. Cousin Slender, don't stand shill I, shall I, but give him the note.

Slen. Ay, ay, if coz is killed, I shall have his estate; and so there's the challenge. [*Exeunt Shal. and Slen.*]

Fal. A challenge!—By the Lord, and it is a challenge. I am called upon here to meet him on Tower-hill incontinently at single rapier. Hoo! what a turluru! In the name of common-sense is the fool turned madman? What means the simple tony by this? To get his money again? Does he think by running me through the pericardium to become my heir at law? The fearful stag is at bay, and become desperate. But let me see—what's to be done here? I am in person too much of a knight to engage with so little a 'squire. I have it. Bardolph, I being your master and a knight, thou art by the laws of chivalry no less than a 'squire. Now, as I take it, this quarrel is properly thine: thou must meet Justice Shallow at single rapier.

Bar. I, Sir John. He has no quarrel against me. The challenge is given to your honour.

Fal. True; but I tell thee my honour disdains to encounter a pitiful 'squire: thou must take my sword and fight him.

Bar. I shall only disgrace your arms, Sir John.

Fal. Go to, you will do well. He knows nothing of the sword; and should he challenge thee at pistols, put a charge into each barrel, and present thy nose at him; he will never stand thy fire.

Bar. Indeed, Sir John, I must be excused. I never could fight in my life, unless there was something to be got by it; a booty on the highway or so.

Fal. Why, 'tis for a thousand pounds, you rogue.

Bar. And where's the money?

Fal. At my cashier's.

Bar. Well then, Sir John, why should we fight for it?

Fal. Bardolph, thou art a coward; but no matter. I have a thought: I will meet him myself. Go, fetch the buckler I fought with at Shrewsbury. [*Exeunt.*]

ACT V. SCENE I.

Tower-Hill. PISTOL and Justice SHALLOW enter, stript for the Combat.

Pistol.

DREAD nought, brave 'squire, the knight's a coward rank.

Shal. I am glad to hear that, and yet I would I had had a lesson or two more before I had encountered him.

Pistol. Bear thy point thus—sa, sa, friend Shallow, sa. Do thus, I say, and trust Pistolo's art. I to the buxom widow will relate This deed of prowess.

Shal. I will essay; but some one comes this way; let us retire, and try that pass again. [*Exeunt.*]

Doctor CAIUS and Man enter.

Caius. Jack Rugby, follow me, Jack Rugby: I 'ave hear dere is to be duel fought hereabouts, by and by. If de parties be not killed outright dey may vant assistance. Ve must vatch de opportunity, Jack Rugby.

Rug. To prevent the gentlemen fighting, sir—

Caius. To prevent their fighting! vat 'ave we to do wid dat? No, you fool, Jack: to take care of the wounded; dat is my business.

Rug. But how if the other should run away?

Caius. By gar, let him run: he be no patient for me.—
Come dis way.

FALSTAFF *enters.*

Fal. Aha—aha—What a vile mist there is abroad to-day! I cannot see a sword's length before me. This must be the spot. But where is the adversary? I would not have him, methinks, lost in the fog.—Master Shallow! Master Shallow!

SHALLOW *re-enters.*

Shal. Ay, ay, Sir John, here am I.

Fal. Saints and good angels guard us! What is this?

Shal. Come, Sir John, draw, draw.

Fal. It calls me by my name too! *Jesu Maria!* It is no *deceptio visus*. In the name of Heaven and Earth, what art thou? Ouphe, fairy, ghost, hobgoblin, or demon? *Exorciso te.*—*Pater noster*—

Shal. Come, Sir John, don't think to put me from my purpose: you know me very well. You know Justice Shallow to his cost.

Fal. How! can this thing be Robert Shallow of Gloucestershire, esquire, justice of the peace and of the quorum? I took it for some strolling ghost escap'd out of purgatory, by all that's terrible.

Shal. Sir John, this mockery shall not suffice you.

Fal. Nay, it is true, as I am a sinner.

Shal. Will you fight me, Sir John, or will you not?

Fal. Fight thee! When thou seest the princely eagle descend to encounter the tom-tit. What! shall the lofty elephant wield his proboscis against a mite? Shall Sir John Falstaff draw his martial sword against such a pig-widgeon as thou?

Shal. What then did you come here for, Sir John?—If you would not be treated as a coward, lay down your target and draw.

Fal. Lay down my target, sayst thou? Who would be fool then? Look ye, Master Shallow (since shallow thou wilt be) if I fight it must be on equal terms. It is but equitable that my body should be secur'd, when I engage with an unsubstantial form; a thing that has none. Dost thou think me such a goose-cap as to lay open this fair round belly to the point of thy rapier, when thou presentest not a mark for me. It were as good as pricking at a lottery, ten thousand blanks to a prize, to make a thrust at thee. It were indeed more than a miracle to hit what, rhetorically speaking, is impalpable. But come, if thou must fight with me, thou shalt not say I deal unfairly by thee. To draw my sword would be needless—for hit thee I never shall—that's flat. Therefore, Toledo, rest thou in thy scabbard. This is my ward. [*Stands on his defence with his target.*]—Carry thy point as thou wilt: if thou canst not come into me before thou art weary, the money is mine; if thou dost, and woundest me, I will then—keep it to pay the surgeon. So, come on.

Shal. Sir John, you are a cowardly knave, and I will kill you if I can.

[*They fight. Shallow thrusts at Sir John, who receives his point always on his target.*]

Fal. Well said, Master Shallow.—Bravo!—To't again.
—Sa—sa.

[*Shallow breaks his sword, and Falstaff closes with him, and seizes him by the collar; on which Shallow falls down on his knees, and Falstaff claps the target on his head.*]

Fal. Ha! have I nabb'd you? You should have appointed sticklers, Mr. Shallow. What if I cut thy throat now?

[*Taking off the target.*]

Shal. Sir John, my life is in your hands: but you know you have wrong'd me.

Fal. Well then, thy wrongs be forgotten; and, on that condition, I give thee back thy forfeited life.

Shal. And I hope also you won't bear malice, Sir John, against me for the future.

Fal. By the Lord, not I. I do admire thy magnanimity and valour. Why, thou art the very mirror of prowess, and pink of 'squire-errantry. John of Gaunt was a fool to thee. Were I a king, thou should'st, for this day's work, be made a knight with all the honours of chivalry. Nay, by our lady, I will take majesty upon me, and knight thee myself. Rise up, Sir Robert Shallow, knight of the most horrible order of combatants and murderers of the fifth button. And now, Sir Robert, if thou dost not think the title I've bestow'd on thee worth the thousand pounds I owe thee, I will, for the first time, make restitution. Thou shalt be repaid out of my wife's portion. For thou must know I am this night to be married, and have broke into the round sum to make handsome preparations for my nuptials.

Shal. I give thee joy, Sir John; and, as I find there is still so much honour in thee, I will open my heart, and confess to thee, that both my nephew Slender and I are going to be married too.

Fal. Ay! to whom, Master Shallow—to whom?

Shal. I to the wealthy widow of Watling-street, and my nephew Slender to buxom Beatrice, her niece, of Bucklersbury.

Fal. Master Shallow, you are deceived, Master Shallow.

I will be a friend to thee. The widow and her niece are impostors.

Shal. Impostors!

Fal. Whores, whores, Master Shallow!

Shal. How! the widow of Watling-street, and Mrs. Beatrice of Bucklersbury——

Fal. Go to, I mean thy widow——Give me thy hand; I will tell thee more as we pass along. [Exeunt.

Doctor CAIUS and his Man enter.

Caius. Dey shake hands!——Eh, morbleu! dey be one brace of cowards. Dat fat knight never once draw his rapier. By gar, did we not get more by de maladie de France, dan by de English courage, we should not get salt to our pottage, pardie. But, by gar, I vill charge them both for my attendance; and if they no pay me, I will expose their no courage.—Come along, Jack Rugby. [Exeunt.

PISTOL enters.

Pistol. The train takes fire, and all will soon be flames; The 'squires are gull'd; and Doll and Quickly take For dames of wealth. The corporal plotted well.

Nym enters, who gives Pistol a Letter.

Nym. A letter from Madam Ursula; see if there's humour in it.

Pistol. Ha! prize or blank! I'll open it, and read Our fortune in the lottery book of fate.

[Pistol reads to himself.

By Jove's bright welkin 't is a golden prize.

Nought could withstand the flash of Pistol's prime.

She writes us here she scorns the wassel knight,

Who keeps to-day high revels at the globe:

Where, if we meet, we may in masquerade
Be sped; I to the mistress, you the maid.

Nym. Marry-trap, the humour is good; but how shall we know them?

Pistol. In purple garb, like nymphs, they 'll be array'd;
And in feign'd voices speak: the word is *sob*!
Let us about our own disguises strait:
Cunning outwits, and courage conquers fate. [Exit.

SCENE II.

3 *A Ball-Room.* FALSTAFF, SHALLOW, and SLENDER enter
in Dominos. Their Masks in their hands.

Shal. Marry, Sir John, thou hast a pithy pericranium;
this is a notable contrivance. I have appointed the parties
as you directed to be dressed in purple, and to meet us
among the revellers here at the globe.

Fal. Thou hast done well, Master Shallow; and I see
you and your nephew are clothed in the same disguises as
Nym and Pistol.—You shall see sport, Master Shallow.
—But see, the maskers come this way. I must go meet
the bride. [Exit Falstaff.

[Shallow and Slender put on their masks.

*A number of Maskers enter; among the rest PISTOL, NYM,
Mrs. QUICKLY, and DOLL. After them FALSTAFF
re-enters, leading in URSULA, followed by BRIDGET.*

Fal. Gentles, you're welcome. You see I come unmasked
among you. It were superfluous for him to hide his face
who could not be concealed for his belly. Could I mask
that indeed, I might pass in disguise. But come, begin the
dance: I hope there will be yet concealment enough in this

revelry to defeat the rogueries contrived in darkness, and bring them to light.

Pistol. [To Nym.] Nym, who are those in purple vestments clad?

Nym. The two in green?

Pistol. In robes of Tyrian dye.

Nym. By their garb they should be the parties; let us accost them. The priest is ready without. We will be speedy; and, when sped, return unmask'd, to tantalize the knight. [They go up to Quickly and Doll, and take them out.]

A DANCE.

Pistol and Nym re-enter, unmask'd.

Fal. Pistol, how now? Wherefore hast doff'd thy mask? Art thou the master of this feast, or am I thine?

Pistol. That is as fortune bids, and time shall show; Some mount aloft, while others truckle low.

Sir Knight, no more your ancient and base tyke, Pistol was born to wield the potent pike.

Fal. Pistol, thou art always in the clouds. Art thou drunk—or hast thou got a commission?

Pistol. Gold honour buys, and Ursula hath store.

Fal. How, rascal! dost thou mean to rob my wife?

Nym. Thy wife! marry that were a good jest. I see the humour runs well.

Pistol. Not thine, but mine; proud Basilisco Knight? Without, just married, waits thy quondam flame.

Fal. To thee?

Pistol. To me.

Fal. Nym, what sayest thou?

Nym. Marry, Sir John, that's the short of it: and I myself was just now married to Mrs. Bridget, her woman.

Fal. [*Turning to Ursula.*] Say, my fair queen of Sheba, is this true? unmask: nay, gentles, all unmask, that we may see what faces are put on.

Urs. You, Sir John, can answer for me.

Brid. And you for me, madam. Marry a corporal indeed! the fellows are drunk.

[*Pistol and Nym look at each other with confusion and astonishment; during which time Mrs. Quickly and Doll Tearsheet enter unmasked, and, passing by Pistol and Nym, (who start back with fresh astonishment) go up to Justice Shallow and Master Slender.*]

Fal. How now, you bare-faced strumpets! what do you mean? This is no brothel: play no gambols here.

Quick. Marry, come up, Sir John; you will not hinder my going to my husband. Mr. Shallow will protect me, my dear Mr. Shallow.

Dol. No, nor me neither, were he twenty Sir John Falstaffs. Sweet Mr. Slender.

Shal. Goody Quickly, loose your hold, I pray you; I know you, Mrs. Quickly.

Slen. Ay, and I know you too, Mrs. Dorothy.

Dol. O ho! do you so? What, Sir John hath blown us, hath he? But no matter; he cannot unmarry us.

Quick. No, truly, that he can't.

Fal. Nor would I: for since whores and rogues have consorted, I have never seen four better matched.

Quick. I to wise Justice Shallow.

Dol. And I to foolish Mr. Slender.

Shal. Not so, hostess; keep your distance, I pray you.

Slen. No, no, keep off; Dol, keep off.

Quick. Plain Doll! do you hear that, Mrs. Slender?

Dol. And hostess, truly! do you take that, Mrs. Shallow?

Fal. Away—ye termagant jades: or I will demolish your

frippery.—There are your cuckolds. Pistol, Nym, why stand ye there like mutes? Are you fascinated at the success of your mummary? Or are you ruminating on the comforts of cuckoldom by anticipation.—Take hence your crooked ribs.

[*Pistol and Nym go and take Quickly and Doll by the hand.*]

Quick. What, has there been a trick, then, played on us in these disguises? Was I married to you, Pistol?

Pistol. Dame Quickly, thou art mine. The fates have crossed us.

Fal. Nay, I'll be sworn they have joined you.

Dol. And was I married to you, Nym?

Nym. Even so, Doll. I am heartily sorry for it; but luck hath turned tail upon us, that's the trick on't.

Dol. A very scurvy trick, indeed; but I had so many husbands before, that one more or less breaks no squares with Doll. Come, Mrs. Quickly, be of good cheer: Pistol is better than nobody: he will protect thee by outswaggering the swaggerers.

Pistol. Contented I, since so the fates decree,
Soldier no more, a victualler I'll be;
The martial sword exchange for carving knife,
And cut out viands for the means of life.
No more in anger fight, but joyous dine,
And 'stead of drawing blood, draw sparkling wine;
Nay, should Sir John himself my service lack,
At the boar's head he'll find a glass of sack.

Fal. But wilt thou put no lime in it, Pistol?

Pistol. No, by Falernian Bacchus, for my knight.

Fal. Then will I be thy guest. Nay, by'r lady, thou shalt for once, be mine too. I will not break off the thread of our quondam familiarity with so little grace as Majesty hath done. I do invite you all, therefore, to supper with me.

And if you cannot laugh over the success of your own contrivances, be merry on the consummation of my nuptials.

*Come, spouse, though long indeed hath been our courting,
We're not quite past the days of love and sporting ;
'Tis true, a younger bridegroom had you sped,
He might have been less prone to sleep in bed ;
Yet ev'n in autumn, some spring flowers may grow,
As there are lilies in September blow :
Youth's wild oats sown, 'tis ne'er too late to mend ;
The worst once past, the better is the end.*



EPILOGUE.

Written for Mrs. PRITCHARD.---Spoken by Mrs. HOPKINS,
Who enters, reading a Card.

*THE muse of Shakspeare's compliments !—A card
T' excuse this evening's enterprizing Bard !
Great his presumption, to confess the truth :
But, as he pleads the passion of his youth,
Together with the magick of her charms,
Attracting him resistless to her arms ;
Though somewhat by surprize, she owns, she suffer'd,
Yet, as no actual violence was offer'd,
She's willing, if the audience should agree,
For this one time to set th' offender free.
We women soon forgive, if not forget,
The crimes our beauties make the men commit,
Especially when once we're past our prime,
And Shakspeare's muse, like me,'s the worse for time.
For, though she charm with fancy ever young,
Though heav'nly music dwell upon her tongue,
Lost many an artless smile and dimple sleek,
Which sat alluring on her virgin cheek ;
Beauties, that faded on the gazer's eye,
And no cold-cream of comment can supply.*

*As for what Merc'ry in the Prologue told ye ;
Pray, let not that from clemency withhold ye.
That Hermes was of old a lying blade,
And practis'd in imposture, as his trade ;
The patron he, or classic lore deceives,
Of cheats, forestallers, bigglers, bucksters, thieves.*

*Besides,—to tell you a stage-trick of ours—
 But you'll not spread the secret out of doors,—
 The man was no more Mercury, than I am
 Queen Hecuba, the wife of Trojan Priam.
 A messenger from Phæbus ! He a god !
 I can assure you all, 'twas Mr. Dodd ;
 His dropping from the clouds, was all a sham ;
 And his pretended errand but a flam.
 We've heathen gods of paste-board, made to fly
 On hempen cords across the painted sky ;
 Those canvas clouds, that dangle there above,
 Inveloping the throne itself of Jove !*

*His tale fictitious too, though told so glib ;
 For take it on my word, 'twas all a fib.
 Old Falstaff in Elysium !—To my thinking,
 So great his natural tendency to sinking,
 That to the shades if he had once descended,
 To bring him back, not Atlas had pretended.
 Dramatic sprites (at least they tell me so)
 Dwell not with saints above, nor devils below :
 But, form'd th' imagination to engage,
 During their short-liv'd passage o'er the stage,
 As mere ideal characters exist,
 And stand as cyphers, mark'd on Nature's list ;
 To genius giv'n a delegated power
 To form these transient beings of an hour ;
 Which, from this mimic world whene'er they go,
 Are free to range in fancy's pimlico ;
 A limbo large and broad ; which in the schools
 Is call'd by some the Paradise of Fools.
 Feræ naturæ THERE, their preservation
 Is purchas'd by no game association :
 The poaching plagiary alone denied
 A privilege, granted to each bard beside :*

*Who, though a cottager, to try his skill,
May shoot, or course, or hunt them down at will ;
In his own paddock may the strays receive,
And scorn to ask a lordly owner's leave.*

*Not that but here, the Author of the play,
By me begs leave submissively to say,
' None more than he reveres great Shakspeare's name,
' Or glows with zeal to vindicate his fame.'*

THE END.

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